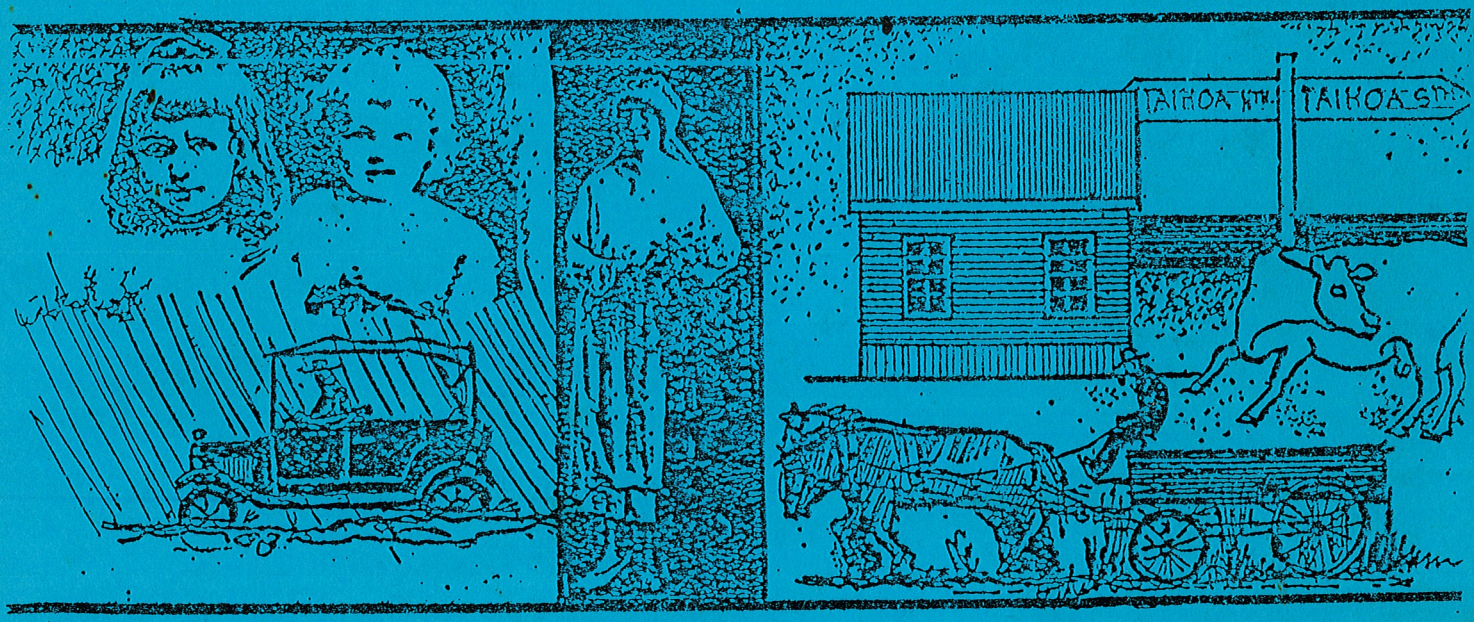
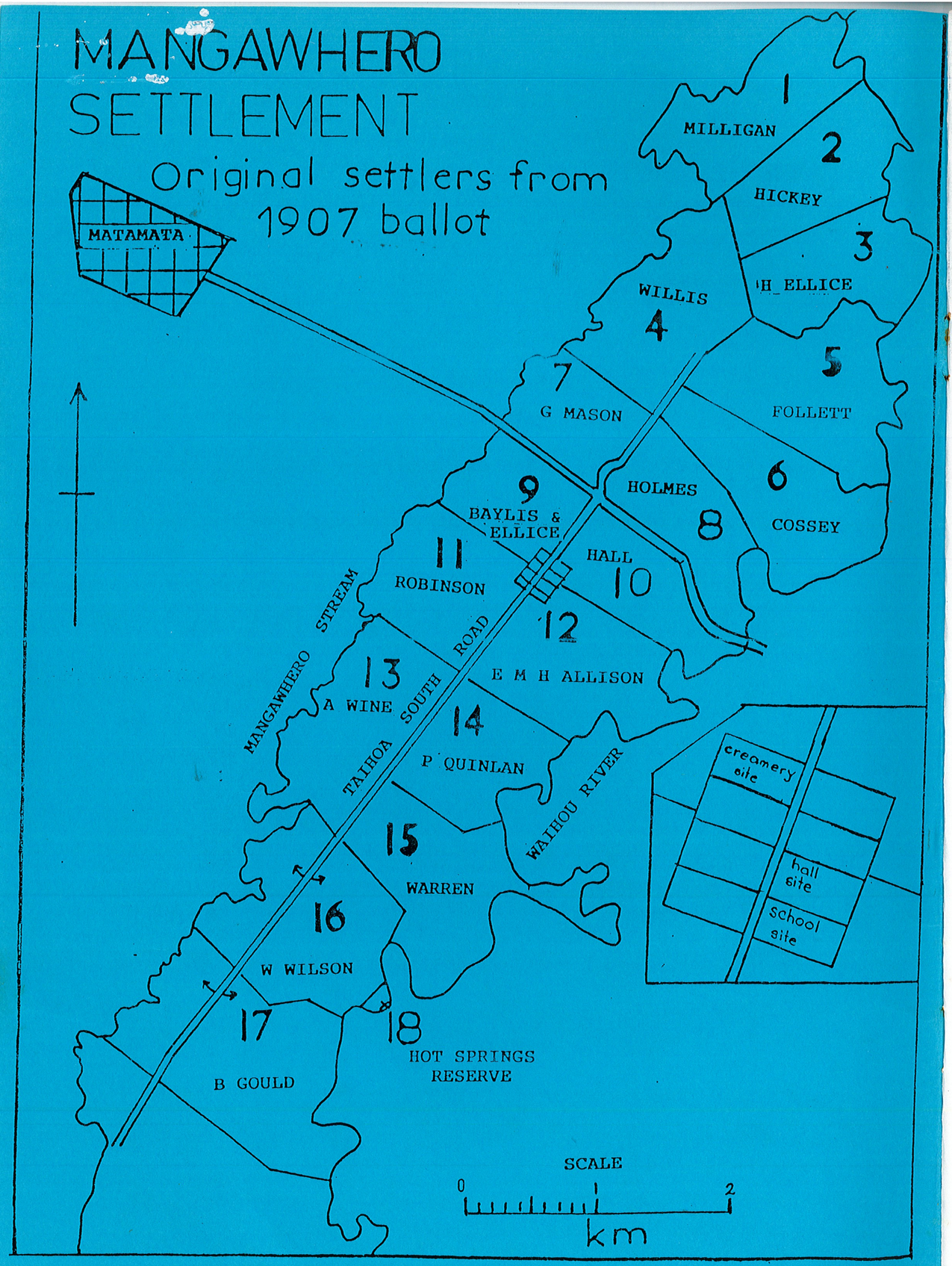
TAIHOA TALES



LOCAL FOLK STORIES BY LOCAL FOLK



Taihoa Tales

Local Folk Stories by Local Folk

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INTRODUCTION

The Mangawhero (now Taihoa) Settlement was offered for ballot in 1907. There were 11 dairy farms, 6 ordinary farms and 8 suburban allotments of 3 acres each.

Six of the farms included blocks at Te Hanga on the Kaimai Range. A cart road connected the two blocks, approximately 30-40 kms apart. Applicants for farms were required to deposit a half-year's rental varying from 15 to 30 pounds per year. Rentals for dairy farms varied from 3/6 to 5/- per acre per year.

It is interesting to note that there were two trig stations in Taihoa — one on Fiddlers Green drawn by the late Mr Johnson and the other on the "Homestead" land drawn by the late Mr W.S. Wilson. On his land too there is a hot spring reserve by the Waihou River. One of the suburban sections opposite the hall, a creamery was built for receiving and separating milk. A post office was later established in the creamery house.

On one

Over the years the younger generation has taken over, benefiting from the work of the early settlers.

The stories in this collection are the memories of people who have lived in Taihoa. I am sure you will find them interesting.

F.J. Williams

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Going to School

Ruth Dover (nee Anderson)

Walking to and from school was a big part of our weekly routine. Some lucky children rode ponies but we trudged along or raced about depending on the mood of the day. I suppose there was usually a group of us but often I must have been lost in a day dream of my own.

I recall clearly standing in a drift of sandy dust, kneading it with my knobbly little feet and forming repetitive patterns. By dawdling behind the other children I risked my mother cutting across Thornton's paddocks and giving me a hurry-up with a fern stick.

On windy days the dust coated our teeth and settled on everything along the roadside. We would stop for a snack of bronze/green leaves from the tips of barberry twigs or occasionally sit down near a patch of sorrel weeds, spit on the leaves, rub them with a finger to get rid of the dust and then enjoy the sour taste. Of course, if you didn't like the sandwiches which you'd been given for lunch, you poked them in the hedge for the birds. Then from the big box at the gate you collected the bread and meat order, nibbled the corners of the loaves and made appetisers from little balls of raw sausage meat.

We rarely encountered any traffic but now and then Banana Bob puttered past in his little old truck sitting to one side of the steering wheel because he was too big to fit behind it. He'd slow right down and roll oranges across the road to us. I don't recall anything else about him but in view of his nickname I suppose he might have had some connection with the fruit trade.

As I remember it there were very few cars on the roads and they pottered along very sedately. I came out of a daydream in the middle of the road once and ran in front of a car. The driver reported this to our teacher who punished me with a few smart smacks around the legs with a wooden ruler. I don't think that hurt much but I was most intrigued by the creaking of her corsets as she bent beside me.

Then there was the time that my brother explained to me the reason for the red painted metal or wooden arms stuck on the side of mail boxes. "You put them up each day so that the mailman will be sure to stop." Enthusiastically I carried out this important job. Soon the mailman got tired of stopping and finding no letters to collect - someone told on me and no doubt the teacher's corsets creaked again.

The boys used to throw stones at the shiny cream-coloured insulators on the power poles. Sometimes they made screeching noises with a blade of grass held firmly between their hands. Grasses and weeds were used for many games. "Tinker, tailor, solder, sailor," we chanted moving our fingers up the seed heads of rye, throwing away the one that said you'd marry a poor man and live in a pig sty and hunting for the one which promised a rich husband and a big house.

We hit each other over the head with bobby-knockers made from a reddish straight-stemmed weed with a knob on the end. Biddi-bids were stuck on each other and I once ended up with so many in my hair that I lost tufts when my mother brushed them out. The seed heads of plantain plants were swiped against one that someone else held out until a winner was declared. Whistles were made by biting off the inside stem of a piece of Yorkshire Fog and squeezing the ends.

In wintertime we wore shoes and broke the ice on every puddle that we came to. On the dirt banks at the roadside the ice would stand out in little flakes. We'd lift them off delicately and suck them, throwing away the dirty tips.

Shoes were worn to school on winter mornings but discarded as the day warmed up. I frequently forgot to bring mine home. Once as punishment my father made me walk to school in an old pair of slippers. Dad and I had a few tussles over footwear. To him it was disgracing the family name to go out poorly dressed with dirty shoes. I would leave the shoe-cleaning to the last minute or try to sneak off without bothering. One morning when I was going to High School, Dad insisted that I came back and clean them. "I'll miss the bus!" I wailed, but he was adamant. As I finally went off I determined to miss the bus no matter what. From Thornton's gate I looked over the hill and saw other children still at the intersection so I sat in the bushes and waited. I mentally rehearsed the scene in which I returned home with tears in my eyes blaming everyone but myself. Before I had noticed, Dad came over the paddocks, fern stick at the ready. For a quiet, uncompetitive person my father showed a great turn of speed that morning.

So we walked to school in the late 1930's. Now my grandchildren travel the same road but the bus picks them up at the gate and cars speed along the straights. The barberry hedges have mostly gone and I doubt if anyone sits in the dust sampling sorrel leaves.

Impressions of the Early Days in Taihoa

Mark Madill

I was born in 1913, my memories of the early days date from when I reached the age of four years. I can quite vividly remember from aged four and a half on. As a very small child I was given a little flag and taken to a parade on Armistice day 1914-18 war, in November.

The Mangawhero settlement and a portion of the Selwyn Settlement, locally known as Te Hanga, was acquired by the Government from the late Assets Realisation Board and offered for ballot in 1907. The area offered, contained 7828 acres, sub divided into eleven dairy farms varying in area from 174 acres to 359 acres, six ordinary farms varying in area from 694 acres to 1000 acres and six suburban allotments of three acres each. The terms 'Lease in perpetuity, 999 years'. Six of the farms included blocks from Te Hanga of the Selwyn Settlement now known as Kaimai. A clay cart road connected the two blocks. Applicants for the farms were required to deposit a half years rental and attend at the land Board Office in Auckland in person. Rentals for the dairy farms varied from 15 pounds to 30 pounds per half year, and for the larger holdings (including Te Hanga land) from fifteen pounds to 63 pounds per half year. Rentals for the dairy farms varied from 3/6 to 5/- per acre per year and for the larger holdings including Te Hanga, from 10d to 2/9 per acre per year. Over the years the Te Hanga was sold and it is interesting now to note that from the original seventeen farms, there are now 35 separate farming units.

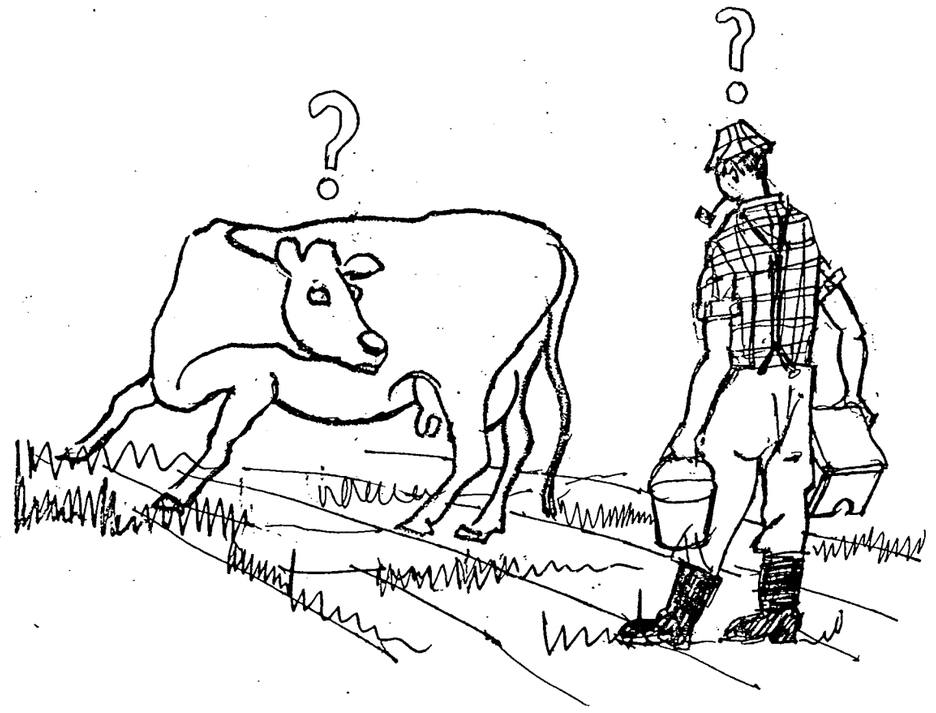
My dad settled in Taihoa in 1911, four years after the Mangawhero block was subdivided. Until then it had been farmed in conjunction with the Matamata Estate. In those days, the farms were being broken in and other than the six sheep units, the farmers were plowing and sowing crops and grass, milking a few cows (20-25) and grazing cattle. The cowsheds were very primitive affairs, the cows being milked by hand after being put in bails and when milked were backed out. Walk through sheds were a thing of the future. After milking, the milk was taken to a creamery about half a mile up the road from the Te Poi-Taihoa crossroads. There, it was separated and the cream taken by rail to Frankton and processed into butter. This method of farming carried on until the Matamata

and Te Poi cheese factories came into being. The creamery closed down and the milk was taken by horse and cart to one or other of the factories.

The dairy farmers were milking more cows by this time and milking plants were being installed. There was no electricity as yet so milking plants were driven by petrol engines in the first of the walk-through sheds. In 1920-21, the dried milk factory at Waharoa was opened by the N.Z. Dairy Company.

My dad joined that factory as one of the first suppliers, the only one in the district to do so. The farm has been supplying that factory without a break up until the present time. Joining that factory meant taking the milk by horse and cart, morning and evening to an old creamery site on Waharoa West Road, where it was picked up by solid tyre electric lorries to be taken to Waharoa. Those lorries were the first around Matamata and were driven by a bank of batteries. They were really a horseless wagon.

It was about 1919-20 that fertiliser started to come into its own and had to be carted by wagon from the Railway Station. At that time there was a general carrier in Matamata, Mr Dan Fussey, who had a beautiful team of Clydesdale horses (about eight) and also a big block wagon. (A block wagon or dray didn't have springs). He used to stable the horses in a stable situated almost at the Tamihana-Rata Streets corner. At times he used to graze them on the Domain. His wagon carried three tons and he delivered most of the fertiliser around Matamata. When he was carting near Matamata, he would use four horses but when he came to Taihoa he had to use six, sometimes three abreast and at other times six in tandem. The extra horses were needed to climb the hill at the Mangawhero stream.



The roads were still either sand or clay but some were being metalled. There were no quarries around Matamata, only sandpits. The metal used was white limestone metal railed from Waitomo, more work for Mr Fussey. The first road to be tarsealed was the Mangawhero Road from Matamata to the Taihoa North South road corner. An interesting point here was that the hills on either side of the Mangawhero stream were left unsealed so that the horses could get a grip when pulling heavy loads.

To maintain the sand roads the County had sandpits in different areas, the pit for Taihoa being in the hill just below John Thornton's shed. The County supplied a horse and dray and a little hut on iron wheels that was towed from pit to pit behind the dray.

Mr Pemberton was employed by the County and he would move from one pit to another, spending about ten days at each, living in his little wheeled hut, patching and repairing the roads, all done by shovel. As a kid, I used to go and see him at teatime, he cooked a lovely Irish stew in a camp oven and would always give me some.

Transport in those days was by gig or buggy. Status at that time wasn't whether you had a Mercedes or a Ford but whether you had rubber or iron rims on your vehicle.

Electric power was laid on in 1924, a big step forward and gone were the candles and engines to crank. Also at this time the first cars started to appear. Mr Bill Wilson had a Cleveland, Mr Ernie West an Oakland, Mr Harry Wright a Wentworth and Mr Morgan Gould a Ford Model T.

The horses for farmwork still held sway. It wasn't until the middle thirties that tractors came on the scene. Most farms had at least one broodmare to keep their teams up to date. Actually, at home we had seven, and used to breed Clydesdales for the Auckland market. Most went to A.B. Wrights or Northern Roller Mills. We used to break them to chains and shafts and sell them as two year olds.

Mr Frank Richmond who had a farm on the corner of Hinuera Road West and Puketutu Road, had a top Clydesdale entire named Artimus Ward, that was in great demand to service the mares on the different farms. Mr Richmond would ride his hack and lead the stallion. A day's run would be round through Hinuera down Taihoa South Road, Taihoa North Road and through Matamata and home to his farm.

School in those days was something else, compared to today. Most of the children were barefoot and walked or rode a horse, with the horses having from one to four children on them. The first school in Taihoa was in a shed at the back of our home.

Mr Chalmers had a roll of twelve and taught there until the local hall was built. In 1912 the hall was built and doubled as a school until 1953. It was a one teacher school with the role getting up to over 40. Miss Bull taught from Primer One to Standard Six until 1925 when Standards 5 and 6 went to Matamata High School, the Education Board supplying the transport. Mr Mick Brunton, a Matamata carrier got the job. He had a Reo truck with wooden seats along each side.

Miss Bull was a wonderful teacher and all the kids did their best for her. She lived in Matamata and travelled each day in a cute little gig pulled by a Shetland pony called Rangi, a smart little outfit. For good behaviour, pupils were allowed to catch and harness Rangi.

Entertainment at that time was a do-it-yourself thing where the different settlers would invite others into their homes. Everyone seemed to have an item or they would have a singsong around a piano. The hall was made use of as well. The district would get together and run two balls each year, the Benedick Ball and the Bachelors' Ball. This meant taking all the desks and school things out and doing the floor. After the ball was over, everything had to be put back ready for school next day.

An annual event was the Settlers' picnic which was held under the pine and oak trees on Mr Wilson's farm, a lovely spot on the northern side of the driveway into Mrs Ivy O'Sullivan's. It was quite an effort - all the seating, crockery and copper had to be carted by wagon from the hall. It was a great day with races for the young and old, and lolly scrambles with a lolly-man. The ladies used to prepare a long coat for the lolly-man by tying dozens of small bags of lollies to it. The lolly-man would run all over the place with all the kids after him trying to get a bag of lollies.

Life went on through the 20's, nothing was easy but nobody growled. They just got on with it, thinking the better days were coming, but the 1920-35 slump put a hold on that. However, nothing is forever and changes came. Roads improved and almost everybody had a car, doing away with the gigs and buggies, and contractors picked up the milk from milk stands which cut out a lot of horse work.

In the 1920s all stock had to be driven to get from A to B. There used to be huge mobs of cattle and sheep driven over the Kaimais from the Bay of Plenty and East Coast. Thousands of sheep in a mob. They would take up the road for over two miles. There were few hedges and trees in those days and coming past the dairy farms with only four or five wire fences, the sheep in front would spread out on the farms on either side of the road. The drovers behind would gather them in with their dogs and get them back on the straight and narrow. Cattle as well, would come in big mobs up to a thousand at a time on their way to cattle fairs in the Waikato.

Horses were driven as well, mobs of up to a hundred on their way to horse fairs at Matamata or Cambridge. It is hard to believe with modern transport we have today that the horse trainers used to walk their horses over the Kaimai Ranges to Tauranga races. Mr Alan McArthur and Mr Jim Martin would ride a hack and lead a string of two or three horses. It was the only way to get to the Tauranga races. The other courses could be reached by rail in special trucks they had at the time.

From the Ladies Point of View

Pat Madill

GARDEN PARTIES

We needed funds for the school so the Taihoa ladies with much thought and enthusiasm decided to have a series of garden parties — old fashioned variety. We all had a part to play — tennis to be organised, tenne-quoits — fishing, a painless way of extracting 6d, to fish a package from a barrel — croquet — clock golf — hitting the clown and in the carshed Skipper St Clair brought his much loved cartoon films (Keystone Cops etc.) to be shown for the children — they loved it.

In the paddock there were donkey rides on Keane's donkeys — tractor rides, only a novelty for the townies. Afternoon tea was sold at a price and of course the inevitable cake and plant stalls. As members of the district it would have been much cheaper and easier to have donated 'so much' a family but of course not half so much fun. It's district functions such as these that make country living so much fun.

'Women's Division' became an important part of social life in Taihoa. Find your 'best bloom', bake your favourite recipe for judging — make something out of a sugarbag and of course, bring a 'plate'. All the ladies attending brought babies and 'at knee' children with them — it wasn't exactly quiet, but problems, joys and laughs were shared by all. We visited other branches round the district and they in turn came to us. It was quite a standing joke that to take on being President was sure to get you 'preggy'.

As the years went by and transport improved, it brought us nearer to town and to other activities, so it was with reluctance that W.D. finally came to an end in Taihoa. However those days are always recalled as 'happy times' in Taihoa.

Progressive five hundred evenings were also popular, while some played indoor bowls. A community spirit prevailed and there was always great neighbourliness in the district. The men shared machinery with their neighbours — even swapping daily help for harvesting etc, and of course country hospitality was very generous at lunchtime — so much so that it was a wonder they were able to return to work later.

The women folk pulled together to transport when it came time for the children to join things like socials, Cubs, Brownies, and Guides — our children were indeed lucky. Children's birthdays were often celebrated by taking an illegally full car of children to the Springs and then home to a sumptuous meal — or a sausage sizzle —camp style in the paddock (not the modern barbecue). Five o'clock pictures in town was a good treat too (no McDonalds in those days).

Guy Fawkes night was always cause for excitement, neighbours would meet round a well prepared fire in a handy paddock on one of the farms. Crackers gave off an acrid smoke but brought a lot of fun. Some years later it was decided that all the district would join forces with a bonfire (built by all the different machinery in Taihoa at the Taihoa hall). Children were instructed to make life-size guys using Dad's cast off clothing. Mark could hardly bear to watch when Ian's guy was tossed on the fire. He felt he himself was suffering some awful fate. Competition was for the best and most original Guy. Inevitably crackers were 'let off' with the 'Dads' sorting the biggest and best, to be let off at the last amidst excited cheers. Supper and raspberry drink was served and parents finally took their offspring home.

Ernie's 50th

Pat Turner

One of the happy memories after we came back to the Taihoa farm with our four children and one that always brought a smile to our faces was Ernie Allison's 50th birthday party.

It was to be a surprise one for Ernie who was blissfully unaware of what was afoot. Olga had secretly made all arrangements for food and refreshments without his knowledge.

The night arrived and a large contingent of Taihoa residents parked their cars quietly on the road-side. Each of us had done our best to represent the title of a song.

In we crept as Olga opened the door, Jean Devine leading the field as Davy Crockett complete with coon-skin cap and gun, and Ernie sitting quietly in his chair as Jean advanced on him. We all burst in singing "Happy birthday, Ernie." He was really dumbfounded for a few moments but soon was very happy as Olga assured him all was under control.

What a night that was! Everyone had to sing the song they represented. Val and Ivy Anderson brought the house down with their title — "A Slow Boat to China" as they both had life-sized dolls in their arms. Duncan's song was "Sweet and Lovely" (with a bag of sugar and a bottle of beer).

Val and Ivy were wonderful dancers and they entertained us with their jiving, etc. Ernie ended up singing, "Sparrow in the Treetops" — his favourite song.

Taihoa was a very happy and united district and we had many enjoyable times. Actually we found later that it was Ernie's 51st birthday — he had lost a year along the way!

Those were the Days

Fay O'Dwyer (nee Holmes)

Why did the settlers have such large orchards? They grew at least a dozen fruit trees bearing cooking applies, another dozen bearing russet apples and another variety of eating apples. Then there were the Golden Queens for bottling, peaches and the sweeter Paragan for eating, the green gage and Christmas plums and the huge gooseberry bushes.

Nestled among the gooseberry bushes and a rather large peach tree was the 'dunny' . . . and that was one of my great fears as a small child . What scheming and thought went into planning an escape route needed when my father grazed sheep with a nasty old ram in their midst, who thought nothing of charging small children who got in his way. I'd peer through the cracks in the walls watching his every movement, and then when I thought it was safe I'd make my escape across the paddock and under the barbed wire fence, which was bound with manure sacks. It was too risky to stop and open the gate, and off over the driveway to the safety of the kitchen.

Deflated

Kay Reddy (nee Kitty Baylis)

I hadn't been at school very long when "this" happened.

I wanted to leave the classroom and go to the "little girls' room" so Miss Tierney let me go. Do you remember how you climbed up the stairs on to the stage, then went out the door and down — what to me — were very steep steps to go over to the toilet? On the way back I started climbing up the steps when I heard a strange noise above me. I looked up and saw the first aeroplane I had ever seen flying over. I just stood there and looked at it. Mind you, it soon flew past.

Then, all excited, I dashed into the classroom and told Miss Tierney that I had seen a real aeroplane! Well! Did she give me a "growling at" for not coming inside and telling everyone else to go out and see the plane too.

That really spoiled my day.

One Dark Night

Joan McDonald (nee Wilson)

I remember that there used to be a great swimming pool in the creek at the back of my Aunt and Uncle McPhail's farm where we spent many happy hours on long summer afternoons. There were also some mighty big eels in there too!

We lived quite a bit in from the road in Taihoa and one dark night a car came up to the house. My father went out and was asked if this was Gould's place. My father directed them to next door. About a quarter of an hour later a car came in and the driver asked if this was the Gould's place. "Next door," said my dad. "But that's what they said at the last place," replied the people. They didn't know that we had two gates on to the road about two paddocks apart.

We used to go to school in the 1930's in a truck which had wooden forms along the sides of the tray. On wet days canvas awnings were let down on the sides and back. At each stop the driver had to get out and put up the steps at the back to allow us to climb aboard. Although the awnings did keep out most of the rain, they did not keep out the wind but I guess we were lucky to get a ride to school.

In those days, the butcher came to the door as did the fish monger in his van on Fridays. Mother would go out and choose the lovely fresh fish which was then scaled and filleted in the back of the van. The cats loved fish day too.

Do you remember the fantastic pianist we used to have to play at the dances? What wonderful dances we had. Sarah Cotter could entice everyone onto the floor and could she make that piano sing! She was as good as a whole band.

One night when I was home on leave from the army, I attended a dance in the Taihoa Hall. I was carried very reluctantly on to the stage to play an "extra". Well, in my nervousness I started up "Bless Em All" at a great rate. I looked around and the dancers looked as if they were doing a threestep polonaise so I slowed down to a more sedate speed and they all started singing to my great relief.

Joe

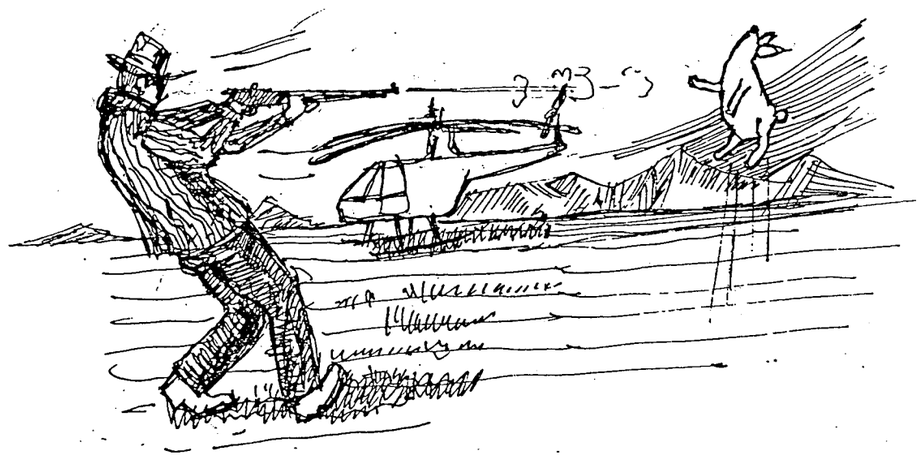
Duncan Turner

Young Joe came to work for us. He was the oldest of a family of five boys and his solo dad rang to see if we would take him as he had just been expelled from school for fighting on the school bus. He was aged 14. So we took him.

Young Joe ran everywhere —never sat on the trailer and always wanted to know what we were doing next. He was a lively lad and a bit of a handful but settled down and saved his money. He certainly did need house training as he told us that his dad bought cases of apples or killed a pig and that was all they ate till it was finished. It was a hard act to follow on our part but eventually he fitted into our family life. He ran for miles each night and became very fit.

One day he arrived home from town with a 303 rifle Monte Carlo stock and tele lens. He had read a book from our bookshelves "A Good Keen Man" by Barry Crump and it had caught his imagination. From that day on he decided to be a deer-culler. He applied for a job in the Urerewa Block but was turned down as he was too young. He stayed with us till he got a job at a mill. There he hunted every morning and late at night after work selling meat and skins. He saved hard, buying himself a farm bike and a ute! Then he slashed out his own air-strip, bought a plane and a 'copter which he learned to fly. In fact he became one of the best 'copter pilots in New Zealand and demonstrated for the Hughes Co.

Joe married a fine girl and had four bonny children. He was really in the big time, flying off to Australia on business trips, etc. Sadly Joe's promising life ended suddenly in a tragic 'copter crash. His funeral was attended by helicopter personnel from the length and breadth of New Zealand.



JOE

A Special Dress

Jean Williams (nee McPhail)

In the 1920's the people of Taihoa often held a pre Christmas function —a dance or a party or something similar which would bring the hard-working folk of the district together. Everyone attended — young, old, landowners, workers, grannies and all the children.

In about 1926 it was decided to hold a children's fancy dress party so, weeks before the event, mothers, aunties and older sisters were busy crafting and sewing the costumes. There were no hire firms then and to spend money buying new material for something to be worn only once was out of the question.

We were no exception and Mother found the material she needed to make the costumes in old dresses of her own and her Mother's. Mine was velvet and, as all sewers know, this fabric must "go with the lay" so cutting out a new garment from a worn, old one would require skill. I watched this magic dress evolve with a $3^1/_2$ year-old's curiosity. It had long sleeves and went right down to the tips of my toes. There was a hat to match tied with long satin ribbons. The lining was white silk from one of Mother's old petticoats. Only the narrow lace at the wrists and neck was new.

The dress was fitted, sewed, trimmed and admired. However I cannot remember what I was supposed to represent! Perhaps it did not matter. It then hung on my wardrobe door awaiting the great event.

Don, who was a chubby $1^1/_2$ year old, needed a costume too. I can remember that it was blue and white and was made from an old frock of Mother's. Perhaps a sailor-boy suit.

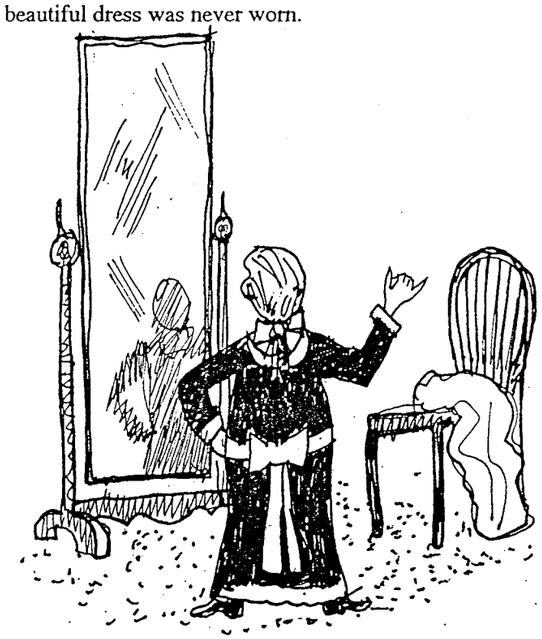
We lived at the southern end of Taihoa about three miles from the hall on a gravel and sand road which was marginally negotiable in wet weather with our horse and gig.

Events in the hall (the first to be built between Morrinsville and Rotorua in 1911) followed a pattern with the men standing around the door in a group and the women seated around the walls and some, of course, working in the kitchen. Some of the older men spent much of the evening tending the copper outside with wood to boil the water for the tea to go with all the lovely baking for supper.

The music was supplied by Jock Milne with his fiddle, my father, Alex McPhail with his accordian and later, Mrs Sarah Cotter on the piano. I well remember the four Cotter boys asleep on rugs on the floor of the stage behind the piano.

At last the Saturday of the fancy dress ball arrived and Don and I were excited but we were still expected to go for a sleep after lunch so that we could stay up longer in the evening. At tea time it started to rain heavily. Much too wet to go out, said Dad and Mother. So — no party!

My beautiful dress was never worn.



A Special Dress
J. Williams

Extracts from "The Taylors of Taihoa"

Ruth Taylor (nee Mason)

There was no bridge over the Mangawhero Stream 75 years ago and when it rained heavily, it could not be forded and a round trip to Matamata had to be made by horse and gig. While waiting for word to take mother to hospital for my birth in Matamata my father had kept the horse and gig at the ready for two weeks. However this particular night he let the horse go in the paddock and at 2 a.m. he had to go out in the pouring rain to try to catch the reluctant animal. There is no mention of my mother's thoughts on that uncomfortable journey round through Hinuera to the hospital.

Shoes were rarely worn to school and I can remember all of us running along a narrow track covered in blackberries, and getting very few prickles.

Our life at home was always busy. Being a large family we were content to stay at home and play hide-and-seek at night or play in the huts we had made under the lawsonianas in the drive. As our home was built like a hotel with rooms off the hall we could run from the back door, jump onto cushions and slide into the front door. Pool Mum!

I well remember the old draught horse we used to pull up the grab to build the stack in the hay paddock. At lunch time our dear old nana climbed under the fence and walked across the paddocks to bring a cane basket filled with goodies she had made. I can remember knocking a pen out of Miss Baylis's hand as she was writing — from at least 10 yards away.

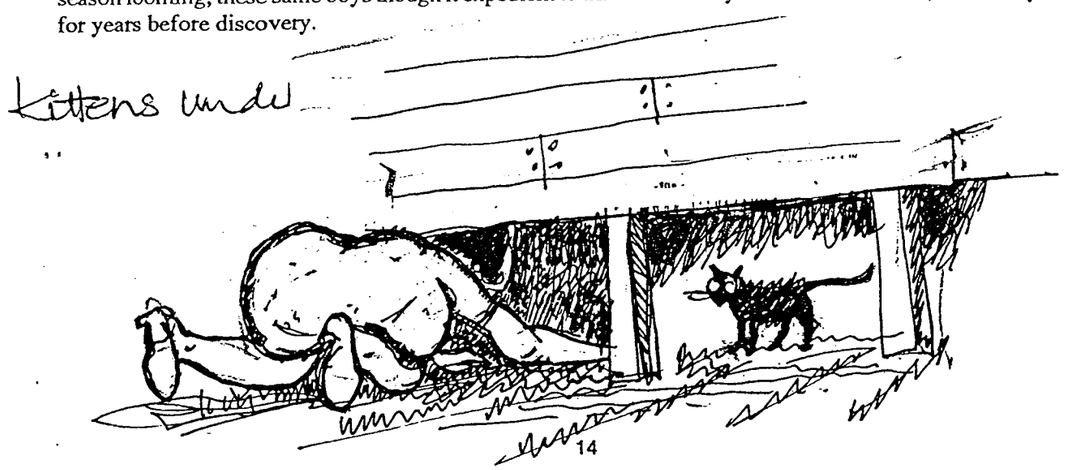
Christmas dinner. I think that is what I remember most clearly about my growing up years on the Taihoa farm. Ten of us round the old wooden table, mountains of food, the usual arguments over wings, legs, etc. The staggering down the corridor to collapse on the front lawn until our stomachs recovered sufficiently to take another helping.

Tree huts, tree swings, trolley rides, exploring the creek and writing your name under the Maungawhero bridge, calf club calves, feeding out atop the hay, pets, kites, roller-skating in the cowshed, catching penny doctors and playing in the sandpit were all activities which kept us occupied for hours. I don't remember being bored as we always seemed to be on the go — be it mischief or work! Animals played a large part in our lives. There were calf club calves, cows for shows or just ducklings and chickens. Our family recalls the day two of the boys put the mother duck and her ducklings down the longdrop. We recall too that they had to retrieve them! I spent hours trying to coax out the baby wild kittens from under the herdtester's room. This was a small unattached room where the many wild cats that lived in the sheds used to produce their kittens under. Unfortunately when I did manage to catch any, all I ever got was scratches and bites. I don't remember being able to tame any.

I well remember the day my sister was born — a wet, stormy day. Mrs Holmes acted as midwife. We three girls were told by our father not to go up the hall. We knew something was afoot but not what. In time Mrs Holmes brought out a bundle wrapped in a blanket and asked us if we wanted to keep it. We all said, "No," but we did anyway.

On Sundays a group of young people would walk down the road, gathering more and more as we went along Taihoa Road North. We crossed the creek on a makeshift bridge to the Hot Springs and would return home in time to milk the cows. It's further to walk than it sounds but we never noticed it.

One night after coming home from the cowshed, I discovered my two darling boys had painted each other with aluminium paint all over and then decided to pop into the bath. The paint took years to wear off the bath. The same boys used a whole bag of flour to "top dress" the house and the path to the loo. With the haymaking season looming, these same boys though it expedient to throw all the hayforks into the stream, where they rusted for years before discovery.



Who the Hell are you?

Ivy and Val Anderson

It was in the winter of 1927 that Ivy and I, as newly weds, took over the management of a 306 acre property on Taihoa North Road, on which my father had lent money. Dad was a business man and knew nothing about farming and it was a case of the previous owner walking out and us taking over, straight from a short honeymoon. Ivy had a farming background and I, for some years had been working on farms to gain experience. Although a city boy, I somehow knew that farming was the life I wanted.

The somewhat under-developed property had been supplying whole milk delivered by horse drawn waggon to Te Poi Dairy factory, about five miles away and bringing back skim milk for pigs.

Coincidental with our taking over, the New Zealand Dairy Co. held a meeting in our house, of potential whole milk suppliers to Waharoa Dried Milk Factory. This resulted in five farms agreeing to supply milk in 20 gal. cans to depots at Taihoa crossroads and in front of Bill Christie's property, further up the North Road. This entailed keeping rigidly to set milking times in order to meet the Dairy Co. lorry and continued for many years till tanker supply took over.

Roads were pretty basic, narrow and either rough metal or just sand which had to be constantly graded up. Motor cars were still not that many. We certainly couldn't afford one and it was quite a business going into Matamata to buy supplies and meant the farm waggon or gig. We had a grey mare named Polly, with a mind of her own, when it came to catching, grooming (she's usually been rolling in dust or mud) and harnessing into the gig prior to getting ready ourselves for the journey to town. Broadway and Arawa Street were mostly sand with, as I recall, a strip of metal up the centre. In dry weather, council employees used to spray the sand with a jet of water from a revolving nozzle. On one occasion, Ivy was driving Polly sedately along Broadway, when part of the jet zipped along Polly's side. She up with her head and took off like a thoroughbred in a racing sulky, with Ivy hanging on and gradually gaining control.

Our first motor car was a second hand New Beauty Ford which served us well for a number of years. We taught ourselves to drive and it was no trouble getting a licence. I simply went and asked for one at a specified local garage. The proprietor replied to the effect that he had seen me driving by and I looked O.K., so for a small fee he gave me one. I then said my wife, who wasn't with me, wanted one too, so he then asked "Can she drive?" and I replied, "Yes, just as well as I can," and that's how we got our first driving licences.

In between gradings, the sand roads became so badly corrugated that it felt like driving over a large scale Mother's washing board. I never found out the best speed to attempt to drive at for comfort's sake and on one occasion going to Cambridge we jiggled so much that we shook the spare tyre off the back. Fortunately we discovered the loss in time to go back and recover it from the side of the road.

When we arrived in Taihoa, I was 27 and Ivy 20 and for a couple our age and experience, the 306 acre farm was a big undertaking. Money was desperately short and we had to economise in every way possible. Out only means of cooking, washing and maintaining warmth in the house was a fuel burning Shacklock stove and open fire place. We could not afford to buy coal, so we used wood from pine trees growing along our road front which we cut by hand with a cross cut saw. Soon after we were there, this led to a rather amusing incident. We were working quite close to our road front, Ivy on one end of the saw and myself on the other, when a man on horseback stopped and sat looking at us. This continued for a second or so before he said "Who the hell are you?" After I had introduced ourselves he commented that Ivy shouldn't be doing what she was and went his way. We found out later that he was popularly named "Roaring Harry", as on a quiet day his voice could be heard two farms away. We must have looked like a couple of kids to him, as his own family was grown up to about our own age.

Practically all work on the farm had to be done by hand, which meant employing men and housing them. With a young family coming along, this at times created problems, but under the circumstances appeared to be unavoidable. Any machinery we had was horse drawn and pertained to land cultivation, top-dressing, haymaking etc. For the first couple of harvesting seasons we joined forces, as had been the custom, with neighbours to form a team of seven or eight men to stack the hay, forked by hand. Stackers came along later. It was the accepted thing for the farm wife concerned to prepare, deliver and serve a hot meal on the field. Quite a task, caring for a young family, cooking a dinner, harnessing up the horse and gig, keeping it as hot as possible and bringing it to the hayfield. Sometimes we employed a girl in the house to help with domestic duties, but this again inevitably created problems because some of our young men were not averse to a little fun and games with the girls. In at least two cases this led to later marriage with one pair staying on as a married couple and the other as sharemilkers.

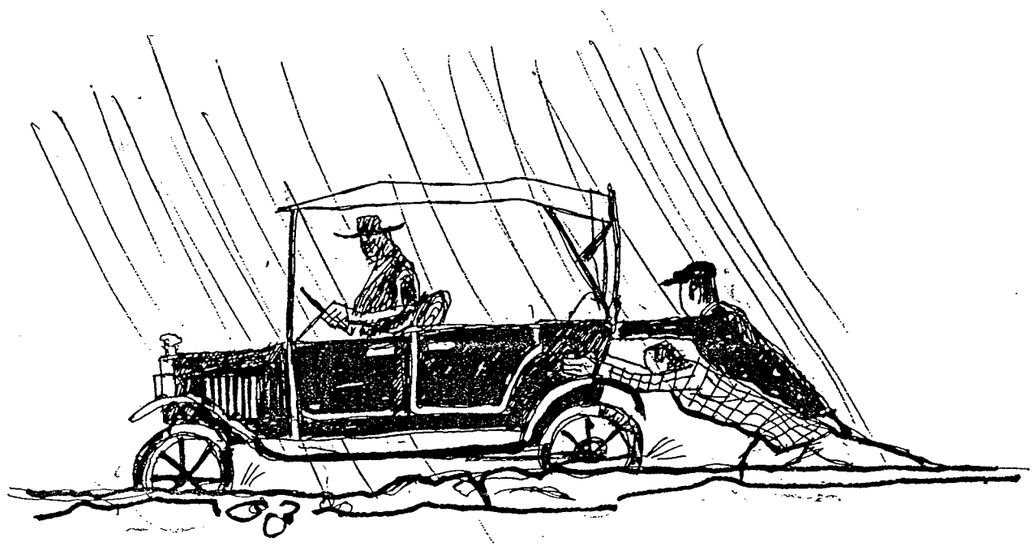
With what available time we had we did our best to join in with the social and sporting life in the district. We had no radio of our own, so used to go once a week to a neighbour's to listen to the broadcast wrestling. As

I recall, Gordon Hutter was the announcer and he used to have us on the edge of our seats as George Walker tried for his 'back loop slam' and Lofty Blomfield for his 'octupus clamp'. Later we had our own radio, but I had to borrow from one of our employees to finance it. We went to card evenings, dances in the Taihoa Hall and played tennis on a neighbour's court when weather permitted. We were both interested in music and used to have sing songs around our piano, on which Ivy was a useful performer.

Later, we formed what we called the Taihoa Mouth Organ Band, which consisted of several harmonicas, a steel guitar, ukelele and vocalist Tom Cotter. We built up a show based on a popular radio programme about cowboys around a campfire singing songs about their life on the prairie in U.S.A. Our theme song was "Roll on Little Dogie" to the tune of "My Bonnie" and we presented items in concerts around the district. On one occasion in the Matamata Town Hall, things became almost a little too realistic. Our transportable campfire consisted of a built-up arrangement of twigs and branches with red crepe paper and a light bulb to simulate the fireglow. Things must have got a bit too hot inside the paper because the next thing we knew was a wisp of smoke drifting up towards the ceiling. One of the boys quietly moved to the fire and under the pretext of attending to it, rubbed the smouldering paper out. We were told afterwards that it looked most realistic. We dressed up in wide brimmed stetsons, coloured shirts, scarves and fringed riding chaps made out of 70lb sugar bags. For a while until it worked itself out, our little show was quite popular, but only that it provided diversion and enjoyable activity for some of the farm boys round about. When we first started, I couldn't play a mouth organ and I got banned to our fertiliser shed where I sat and practised amongst the 187lb bags of super-phosphate until they could bear me in the house again.

How we got through the depression 30's I'll never know, but it was a case of keeping on. We had a good farm and were slowly becoming established, with production increasing year by year. We worked together as partners in everything we did and I counted myself extremely fortunate in having the wife and helpmate I did. Sure, we differed at times and had our arguments and I remember going to a pre-election meeting in the old Town Hall, when Walter Nash (later Sir) outlined his scheme for a guaranteed butterfat price which I think was 1/6 lb. It sounded like "pennies from heaven" to me, but for some reason he didn't go down with Ivy and I had some difficulty keeping her quiet. Anyway it ended up with me voting Labour and Ivy sticking to Reform, as it was then.

We stayed on the same farm till 1966, before eventually selling out to family and coming to live in Tauranga.



V Anderson
Early Days in Taihoa
Model T Ford.

The Good Old Days

Betty Simpson

Perhaps the most exciting function of the year that comes to mind was the Taihoa Settlers picnic.

What a long awaited outing that was. On the day of the picnic, decked out in our best, off we went to Mr and Mrs W.S. Wilson's property on the Taihoa South road.

To me in those days their home looked huge and so lovely. Actually by today's standards it is not large. On arrival the billy was boiled and after excited greetings we settled down to an enticing picnic.

Then the fun began, three legged races, sack races, children's races, married men's races and the greatest fun for the Madill kids, the married lady's race. This was always won by our mum until she grew too old for such capers.

Next thrill was how happy we were to come home from school one day and find new car in the driveway. It was really a Tin Lizzy as they were later named but to our family a Rolls Royce. Once we had the car we always went to church on a Sunday evening. What a noise if the side curtains went up to keep out the rain. Oh how they flapped, you could hear us coming a mile away.

On looking back I realise those Taihoa settlers and their wives were strong, honest and reliable people, striving their level best to bring their land to profit.

Money was scarce, and I realise now the caring and love we had as a family and can honestly say they were the good old days.

EARLY TAIHOA
BETTY SIMPSON.

Where have all the Sky Larks gone?

Fay O'Dwyer (nee Holmes)

It is almost 50 years since I married and moved from the farm to live in town, but I remember the skylarks so vividly - on a hot summer day they would soar so high and fill the air with their song. When a paddock was cut for hay one would sometimes find a nest neatly built on the ground, usually near a cattle track — tiny tiny eggs were so beautiful and the nesting lark never too far away.

The Creek

Don McPhail

All the farms on the western side of Taihoa Road have, as their boundary, the Mangawhero Stream —a busy little waterway with graceful willows on its banks. In later years the willows were to become a nuisance and had to be eradicated.

Our family never called the stream by its real name. To us it was always the "creek" and we made use of it in many ways.

The stock, of course, had access to it and used it all the time. Each milking time two buckets of water (kerosene tins with handles made of No, 8 wire) had to be collected and carried up the steep bank to be used in the cowshed. Many years later the water was pumped up the hill.

Some summers we had a drought and the main water tanks could not cope so cream cans of water had to be sledged up to the house. Precious water —no wastage allowed. Some of it was used twice — once to wash in and then to be used in the garden.

I used the creek too for my first "business" when I was about 12. I had 50 Khaki Campbell ducks and I was allowed to keep the profits after I looked after them, bought the grain and collected and marketed the eggs. It was a lot of work for a young boy but I enjoyed it. After school it was duck-feeding time and after a while I found I didn't need to herd my flock. I would call them loudly and they would follow me in single file across the paddocks to the bin of wheat. With my loud and continuous call of "Mack. Mack. Mack" and every duck calling the same thing, I am told we could be heard for miles.

Dad loved any sport, including eeling, so on some long summer evenings after milking he would collect his bait (huhu bugs out of rotten logs) and his line (a ti-tree stick with a length of string) and spend the remaining daylight hours sitting by the creek. The small eels were taken home to be cooked and eaten — delicious but the big ones, and there were some whoppers, were fed to the pigs.

One hot summer just before the 1939-45 war Dad and our neighbour across the creek, Jim Dawson filled sacks with sand from our sandpit and dammed the creek. The water backed up and we had a wonderful swimming pool. Many children and their parents too came every weekend and we had some great gatherings there. We changed into our togs among the pussy willows on the banks.

The following year the men built a very successful diving board where many of us learnt to dive. Some romances flourished there including one that eventuated in marriage years later. We younger children loved these affairs — a source of wonder and envy!

Sometimes a cow would push under the boundary fence and cross the creek. She would have to be found and brought home to be milked. One cold spring morning Dad had to bring Nosey home yet again. Being a good athlete he had no trouble vaulting the creek using a long, stout ti-tree pole. However, on this particular day, the creek was in flood and when Dad ran up and placed the pole mid-stream, it suck in the mud leaving him stranded at the top with nowhere to go but down into the freezing water. This was bad enough as he was wearing saddle-tweed trousers, woollen longjohns, work boots and heavy woollen socks. Sodden he made his way home across the paddocks to change, followed by Jean and me — we had seen the whole thing but daren't say a word as Dad was livid.

An old Maori man, or so he seemed to us, would come down from Rotorua and camp under the big macrocarpas on Gould's place and fish for eels. He would set up his nets in the creek and walk about a mile downstream and then wade upstream poking and prodding all the holes and drive all the eels up into his nets. He would not kill them then but put them in a sack and keep them in the water. He would repeat this process for nearly a week — then kill and clean the lot, put them in sacks and get my father to take him to the Hinuera station to catch the 9 a.m. paper train back to Rotorua.

DeAth Fire

Margaret McPhail (nee DeAth)

1st December, 1934. Oh what a disaster! Gwen and I were picked up from the Taihoa School to be told that our house was on fire. We arrived home just in time to see the last wall fall in and a great heap of burning timber. Our mother had just left the house to take afternoon tea to the haymakers. The vege man (who called each week) saw mum at the back gate and called out to her "The house is on fire". She rushed to get the men, but nothing could be saved as there was no water.

For the next five months our parents and baby sister lived in the garage "furnished" by the wonderful people in the district — and we were also clothed. Gwen went to stay with the Harris family at Walton and I went to stay with Mrs Milne (Aunt) along the road and brother Joe spent most of his time in the Waikato Hospital with diphtheria.

Behind the house was a coal shed full of coal. Many a meal was cooked there during the next few weeks. All our dolls, books and treasures were destroyed, but many of these were replace d by all the caring people around.

Being near Christmas we were given two big boxes of "goodies" and from the Matamata Guides and Brownies we were each given books — I still have mine 58 years on. When the house was completed — unbeknown to our parents — the District had organised a "House-warming" and people came from far and wide. One room was full of gifts — blankets, pillows, cutlery and every type of china you could think of.

Taihoa was certainly a very caring District.

Itinerant Traders

Audrey Wallis (nee Wilson)

I remember the traders who called at our home with their wares. There was the fish man. On his arrival my mother would go out to his small truck. She would choose some fish and he would skin and fillet it for her at the back of his truck. She must have bought enough to justify his calls as we lived quite a distance from the road.

The itinerant unemployed, called swaggers, were an occasional sight in Taihoa in the 30's. Hunger drove them to knock on doors and offer to do odd jobs in exchange for a meal and somewhere dry to sleep. They carried a sack back-pack with a tin billy tied on the outside.

After a good evening meal, they would sleep in the wash house or a detached shed. I remember them as quiet men with little to say. After breakfast next morning they would chop wood or do some other chore and then leave.

It was said that they had a secret code among themselves — a sign would be put at the gate of a house to indicate whether it was a hospitable place or not. We children looked for such a sign but never found one so maybe it was only a rumour. Some farm houses never saw a swagger. Perhaps it was because their house was too far in from the road. The lifting of the depression saw the last of these lonely men.

The traders I most recall were Messrs Wilkie and Bousie. They came from Auckland in their well-stocked car about twice a year. Mr Bousie, as I remember him, was middle-aged and Mr Wilkie I think must have been quiet elderly. They both wore suits. Mr B. was rather portly and Mr W. was small with a beard. They came into the house and, after greetings all around, Mr B. would go through his suitcases of samples of basic clothing — singles, shirts, trousers, long johns, socks, etc. When my mother had made her selection, Mr W. was sent out to their car to bring in the clothes she had bought.

I think everything they sold was made of wool. The whole transaction took most of the morning and concluded with handshakes all round.

The Big Tuna

Pat Turner

The lads of the family had not much success with their eeling expeditions so when Grandad Smylie, aged 80 plus, arrived for a holiday, he decided to have a go himself. He hopped into his trusty steed, alias his Model A, and drove down the race to the back of the farm.

There was a steep hill down to the Maungawhero Stream to be negotiated on foot. No trouble to Grandad who, at the drop of a hat, had been known to walk over the Kaimais to Tauranga when he felt like it.

As we all gathered for dinner that night to our consternation Grandad was missing. Sudden recollection and horrifying thoughts! Perhaps Grandad, in his endeavours to show the boys how, had fallen into the water in the darkness.

So away they went hastily to rescue him. His Model A was still there at the end of the race but no sign of Grandad. Then as they proceeded down the steep hill a figure emerged out of the gloom. Grandad had a "whopper" and had great difficulty dragging it up hill. A very tired and weary Grandad arrived home but the delight on his face when his big eel weighed in at 22lbs was good to see.

A Maori family were very happy next day with Grandad's big catch and we took a photo to record his big event.

Early Years (1928 onwards)

Pat Turner

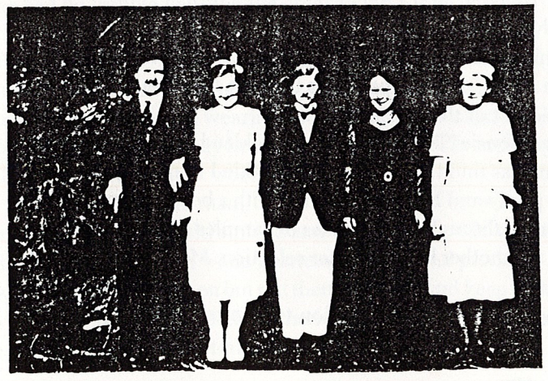
When I was 12 years old my parents bought 100 acres at Taihoa and I have many happy memories of those early teenage years.

The lovely Maungawhero Stream was a source of much pleasure in the summer months and we spent many happy hours picnicking, swimming and sunbathing there. The water was swift-flowing and icy.

Our Auckland cousins loved to come to the farm and holiday with us. Our Irish father was a great believer in manual labour and we were all expected to milk night and morning and to weed mangolds every day of the school holidays. What a refreshment to pop down for a swim afterwards.!

The Taihoa Hall was put to good use in those early days when it also served as a school. The Women's Institute meetings once a month were greatly enjoyed and we teenagers were all called upon to perform occasionally. I can remember being in a play with four others. The only words I had to say as I was the maid were, "A letter for you, madam." What an effort that was! I felt like Sarah Bernhardt. Another time we were coached by Ivy Anderson for a dance routine we were in. We always gathered for rehearsals at her place and she was wonderfully kind to us plying us with delicious afternoon teas — her sponges were really something!

About this time scanties were a new phenomena and, one day while chatting, we all professed ignorance about them. However Nell Gum knew more than we did. She popped into the next room and returned, saying, "Look, girls. These are scanties," as she held up the article in question. So now we all knew!



Teenage years. The Taihoa Terriers basketball team was really active. Life was busy then as we all worked Saturday morning, biked home, changed into our gear and then biked back in the afternoon to play on the High School courts. The Taihoa Hall was the venue for very popular basketball dances. It was great fun decorating the hall and the Mickey Mouse Orchestra with Arthur Lowry was the usual source of music. These dances were always packed out and when I won the Monte Carlo I thought I was Christmas.

Early Customs

Audrey Wallis (nee Wilson)

After we had the telephone installed my mother was able to phone Hawke's butcher's shop at Hinuera to have the meat order went out in an empty cream can from the factory. Our butter came once a week from the factory in a cream can. On a hot day it often melted and on occasions it was forgotten and a bucket of hot water tipped on it when washing the can.

Once a month the phone rang for our grocery order from Settle's store at Hinuera. The box of groceries was delivered by Doug McIsaac. Always included in the order was a 72 lb bag of sugar, a large cloth bag of flour and big quantities of dried fruit as we enjoyed plenty of fruit cakes. There was also a large tin of delicious prunes in syrup to put on our porridge.

The bags the sugar came in were never discarded but were unpicked, washed and sewn into aprons, oven-cloths, shopping bags, swag bags, and, in one family I heard of, made into school trousers dyed navy.

Flour bags and rolled oats bags were unpicked and washed too but then had to have the red lettering removed by soaking them in washing soda. These bags too had many uses such as linings for pants, tea towels, cot sheets, girls' pants and even bathroom curtains (suitably embroidered and with a crochet edging).

Salt bags were softer and smaller. These were neatly roll-hemmed and used as handkerchiefs. In the jam season they were used to strain the fruit.

In the days before home refrigerators our perishable food was put in summer in a bucket and lowered down the well which was in the orchard. For safety the well was covered with a sheet of iron.

We also had a meat safe on the cooler southern side of the house. It had mesh walls of zinc gauze to allow the cool air to keep our perishables fresh longer.

Surplus eggs were "put down" in summer in egg preserver or isinglass after they had first been covered with vaseline. These eggs were useful in the eggless winters when the chooks did not lay. In the spring a nest or two of hen, duck and even turkey eggs were put under a broody hen to hatch and so keep the supply of birds up.

On our way to School

Margaret McPhail (nee DeAth)

I often wonder how long our three mile walk to school took us. Gwen and I and three or four Coombes children started off, then there would be Pryces and Taylors and some others (not sure who) but by the time we arrived at the Taihoa School there would be 10 of us. If it was a really wet day our father would come and pick us up and we would all "pile" in.

What did we do on our walk! If there was a paddock of swedes a long the way we all managed to acquire a sample, but I think our most choice eating were those beautiful Russett apples from the Wests orchard. Somebody was always small enough to squeeze through the barberry hedge, fill their shirts with enough apples to last 3 - 4 days. We had a special place to store them (on the other side of the road) but oh what a disaster one day to find them all gone — Bennett's pigs! Some of us always kept watch in case anyone came, but not until some years later did we learn that Mr West often stood on the veranda and watched us!

If Miss Tierney ever had a note to take to Mrs Bennett, one person would take the note up to the house and the rest of us would wait at the game — for apiece of Mrs Bennett's beautiful toffee. Another great treat for us, were the nights when Miss Tierney went to Mrs Bennett's for tea and three of us were allowed to ride in the "Dickey" seat of her Vauxhall car.

Caught by the Depression

Gladys Shaw / Hall / Wallace Q.S.M.

Jim and Florence Shaw with their four children arrived in Matamata on the 17th June 1918 settling on a farm in Taihoa just over the Mangawhero Stream and running down to the crossroads. Before we came to Matamata we were told of the beautiful plantation of trees at the railway station.

When we arrived in Taihoa, father was not very happy to see the hill running down to the Mangawhero Stream full of rabbit burrows and the roadside around two sides of the farm covered in high gorse. It took him practically the whole time we were in Taihoa to eradicate the gorse and get rid of the rabbits.

My sister and I attended the Taihoa School held in the local hall with Miss Bull as our teacher. My brother, Martin, started school at Taihoa too. Some of the pupils who attended the Taihoa School with me were Les and Eric West, Ernie and Eileen Allison, Irene Wright and the Baylis and Murray families.

Every few months a dance would be held in the hall. All the desks and equipment had to be cleared out to make room.

Sunday School was also held in the hall with Mr Morgan Gould and, later, his sister Frances, as teachers. Mr Gould used to arrived at some speed on his motor bike from his farm at the southern end of Taihoa. We would all sit around a table and he would read us a story from the Bible, say a prayer and then we would all go home. Later still Mr George Mason used to drive us in his wagon to Sunday School in Matamata. One Sunday my sister fell out of the wagon and got jammed in the wheel - panic stations!

Mr Gould and his sisters, Clara and Frances were the family of the Mrs Elizabeth Gould who, I understand, was a survivor of the wreck of the ship, the Wimmera. Quite a celebrity in our district and in New Zealand.

On November 11th 1918 the first world war ended and it was Armistice Day. As we were newcomers to Taihoa father was asked to lend his wagon and horses to be decorated to take the children of Taihoa to the Victory Parade held in Matamata. We children thought that was the most wonderful thing that ever happened.

In those days all the roads were just metalled and were full of holes. We had to travel to town by gig, hitch the horse to one of the hitching rails in town and then go shopping. My brother, who used to suffer from severe croup, caused my parents a lot of worry. An attack would come on about 10 o'clock at night. Father would have to catch the horse, harness it into the gig and go to Matamata to get Dr Carolan for Martin and then drive the doctor back home again.

We bought another farm at Hinuera and sold the Taihoa property to a man who got caught in the 1920's depression and had to walk off. The farm reverted to us and father put his brother-in-law, Harry Hughes, just home from the war, and his wife on the farm. Eventually Mr Robinson bought the farm and married the girl across the road, Kathleen Madill.

Our family after their adventures in Taihoa left in 1920 to go to Hinuera.

Trouble with a Happy Ending

Vida West

During my life on the farm in Taihoa it was my job one particular night to do the milking while the men, Allen and Eric, continued with the harvesting.

We had a little son, Ian aged five years old. I didn't wish to take him to the shed so he asked if he could go to Auntie Vina's to play with Mervyn. I would collect him after milking, as I had done many times before.

After I had finished the milking I went up to collect him only to be told he hadn't arrived. Trying not to panic, I ran back across the paddocks and down the lane calling his name and hoping he hadn't gone near the water troughs. Then I heard a little voice say, "Mummy. Here I am. My legs got tired and I thought I would have a little rest and sleep." He was lying under the hedge and said that he knew the cows wouldn't hurt him. He added, "Mummy, you milked the cows pretty quick."

He had had a good two hours sleep. All was well so home we went to have tea but NOT to go early to bed.

Interesting Octogenarian

From the Matamata Record, 3.9.25.

One of the most interesting personalities in this district is Mrs Benjamin Gould, of Taihoa, so well-known in connection with the wreck of the Wimmera in 1918, when the vessel was blown up by a German mine off the coast of New Zealand.

Mrs Gould, though eighty years of age, is still mentally alert, and her memory of things that happened in younger days is vivid. She remembers episodes of childhood with remarkable clearness, and one may note in her eyes the sparkle of humour or the expression of pathos, according to the kind of incident being recalled.

Mrs Gould was born in Waterford [Waterbeach], Cambridgeshire (England), and the circumstances of her life were such that she had no thought of ever migrating to a young country and sharing the hardships of the pioneers. But an unfortunate turn of Fortune's wheel for her people gave this country one more of the type of women who, along with their husbands, have blazed the trail and laid the foundations of a prosperous and progressive Dominion which has blossomed forth into one of the most desirable of the federation of free nations that we, for want of a better term, call the British Empire. It's an ill wind that blows no one any good.

Coming to New Zealand in the Horsa, Mrs Gould settled in Timaru, and in 1846 was married, in the Congregational Church, to Mr Benjamin Gould, who died some fifteen years ago, leaving the widow and five of a family. Mrs Gould belongs to a family of nine, all of whom are still living, the youngest being sixty-five. It is eighteen years since Mrs Gould left Timaru and came north, and she is at present residing with her son-in-law and daughter, Mr and Mrs A. Wilson.

Readers may recall the story of the wreck of the Wimmera, when on a voyage to Australia, and recollect that Mrs Gould earned fame by being the last white woman to leave the ship, having to be carried off. Her heroic attitude throughout that trying time, when her example cheered others and enabled them to bear up with fortitude, is commemorated in a superb illuminated address presented by the people of Matamata district. Needless to say, this token is carefully preserved and will become one of the heirlooms of the family.

About three months ago, Mrs Gould made a trip to Australia, and prior to her departure the residents of Taihoa tendered her a send-off, and presented her with a fine travelling rug, just for better luck — and the luck held good!

Her many friends will wish Mrs Gould many more years of rest and reflection after so useful and eventful a career.

Tragedy on our Taihoa Farm

Vida West

One winter's morning when there was a very heavy frost Allen and his farm man were feeding out hay to the cows. Allen advised his worker not to go too close to the edge of the gully or he might slip over. "It's O.K.", he replied but it wasn't. It all happened. The tractor ended up down the gully and our man was killed instantly leaving a wife and four children. It took us a long time to come to terms with this sad event but we did our best to support his wife.

Bride on time - Minister late!

Louisa Wilson (Gould)

I was living with my parents, Benjamin Gould and Elizabeth Gould (Denson) and my two brothers, Alfred and Morgan, and my two sisters Clara and Frances, later to be Mrs A. McPhail, on the family farm at Taihoa in the early years of his century. My eldest sister, Clara was working away most of the time. I remembered the occasions when she was home to have her tonsils removed, an operation performed on our kitchen table.

A Mr Thomas Wilson, of Auckland bought a block of land next door to us and two of his sons arrived to break it in. The elder one, Charles Porter Wilson used to visit his family in Auckland, this journey taking three days each way, as he rode his horse across country, avoiding the difficult swampy places as much as possible.

Charles Porter Wilson then asked me to marry him and our wedding in August 1912 was almost a non-event as the minister, who came from Cambridge by horse and gig, got lost.

The ceremony was to be at 2 p.m. and when he hadn't arrived by 4 o'clock all ideas of being married that day were abandoned.

However he did eventually arrive and we were married at home with me carrying a bouquet of daffodils. That evening our wedding breakfast and social was the first function held in the new Taihoa Hall. Next day we travelled by train to Auckland where our wedding photos were taken but, of course, I carried new flowers.

On the farm our house was built and consisted of a kitchen, a bedroom and most important of all, a harness room. My husband had lived in a tent till then, with his brother George.

We bought a cow and some hard food for it as we really had little pasture. This cow used to suck herself, so she used to wear a harness with a stick between her front legs to prevent her from doing so. When we had occasion to be away for a few days sometimes working on the block on the Hanga road, just over the top of the Kaimais, we would remove the harness so that she could suck herself and thus keep in milk until we returned, when the harness would be replaced.

I recall on one occasion staying on the farm while the men took the horses to work on the Hanga road for the day. Their work took longer than anticipated so they stayed the night up there. You can imagine my anxiety. A young bride of 18 years with no one to help. Worse was the desperate crying all night of the foals which had been tied to the piles of the house and needed their mothers. There was nothing I could do for them. As the men had not taken enough food for a second day away, for breakfast they had to resort to drinking mare's milk. In those days the non return of the men usually meant an accident which fortunately didn't happen this time. With no telephone or near neighbours it was an anxious time for me.

There were however many happy times. We had picnics and swims in the hot springs along the Waihou river bank where we used to do the washing when water was scarce.

I made time to make hooked floor rugs, as my mother did. I used old clothing cut into fine strips, which I held on the wrong side of a sugar bag, and hooked through from the right side, making small loops. I varied the colours to suit the design I drew. These rugs wore well for years and years and were the only floor rugs we ever had.

Many years later we bought a car, 1917 Overland and one day while it was parked in Matamata, we heard strange squeaks coming from the back. We found that a litter of new-born kittens had travelled with us in the folds of the hood which was folded down during warm weather. The Overland car was bought when my son Charles Louis was born in Auckland. On the way home the car tipped over on the Rangiriri hill, the road at that time being not much more than a track. However, we weren't hurt, and continued on our way home to Taihoa.

As pioneers we learnt to work hard and there were some difficult years but there were some great times too.

Pastimes of Long Ago

Jean Williams (nee McPhail)

Children these days have trampolines, video games and the like to use in their leisure hours. We didn't have any such luxuries but we were able to amuse ourselves very well with our own creations. Here are some of them. How many did you play? I expect there are others I haven't mentioned too.

1. The fluffy seed-heads of the dandelion told us the time of day when we blew on them. One blow = one o'clock, two blows = two o'clock, etc. until there were no more seeds left.
2. We made acorns into make-believe pipes with stems of straw pushed into the sides.
3. We sucked the sweet nectar out of the purple clover flowers.
4. With the white clover flowers we made daisy chains and wore them proudly.
5. The snapdragon flowers would pop open if pushed gently on the sides. We called them bunnies.
6. Hungry? Nothing was nicer than fresh watercress from the stream.
7. We held the brilliant yellow buttercup flowers under our friends' chins to see if they were reflected. This was sure proof that they liked butter. Never failed.
8. We collected birds' eggs —only one from each nest. My brother collected some one day and hid them in the sideboard where they were discovered three weeks later. Unfortunately he didn't know that they had to be blown!
9. Lying on our tummies on a hot summer's day with a straw pushed down into a hole in the bare ground waiting for a "penny doctor" to bite. When the straw wriggled, we would pull it up with the grub attached. (What are penny doctors?)
10. The hollowed out stem of a piece of willow tree with a dried pea inserted made a good whistle.
11. Put a piece of over-ripe rye grass seed head up your friend's(?) sleeve and tell her to wriggle her arm while chanting, "Adam and Eve go up your sleeve and don't come down till Christmas Eve." Itched like mad, it did.
12. Playing 'Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Sailor" with a head of rye grass to see who we would marry. It worked too — I married a soldier!
13. Collecting the multi-coloured autumn leaves from the fruit and other trees.
14. Bite the end of a piece of Yorkshire Fog and then blow to make a squawker.
15. Try to keep a piece of shivery grass still. Impossible as the heart beat makes it vibrate. Fun trying though.
16. Strip the fibres of a length of flax with a sharp knife. Then roll them to make a whiplash.
17. Press violets in a book, usually a Bible.
18. Search for four-leaved clovers for good luck.

Readers must have had other delights. We had so little but we didn't expect a lot. We made our own fun and we were happy.

A Red Terror

Noel Coombes

I started attending the Taihoa School in 1931. Our teacher was Miss Tierney who lived in Matamata and came to school in a black Ford coupe. She was rather a large woman, quite jovial but a very good teacher, and I can't remember her giving any of the kids the strap. I did get four of the best from Joey Ward when I was in Form II at High School, for not doing my homework.

The occasion I remember most at Primary School was the annual picnic held on John Robert's farm. I won a short running race and was awarded 3 pence and half an orange. We were told all orange peels, apple cores etc. were to be thrown in the fire that they had for making the tea. To my horror when I threw mine, my money went with it. Some of the men who saw what happened scratched around the fire but had no luck in finding it. All those lollies and icecreams gone west!

Life on the farm was quite good and all had our jobs to do — milk cows, feed pigs and calves. Turns were taken doing lawns and vegetable garden. We had quite a big orchard but our neighbour, Ernie West, had better apples. On our way home from school Dulcie and I made Russell (he was the smallest) get through a hole in the hedge and get a shirt full of russet apples.

We told him to only get the ones on the ground as they were the ripest. We were eventually caught out and I got a good hiding from Dad.

Sundays were visiting days, either going to our many cousins or they would come to us. The Finnerty boys, our first cousins, would bring their ferrets and we would spend the day catching rabbits.

In handling the ferrets we had to be careful as they would give a vicious bite and were not inclined to let go.

Uncle Joe was my favourite because when it was time to go home I would rush out and open the road gate for him. That was always good for 3 pence.

School holidays were spent mostly eeling and setting rabbit traps unless I had to go to work with Dad, who was a builder and I had the job of boiling the billy for smokos and lunch.

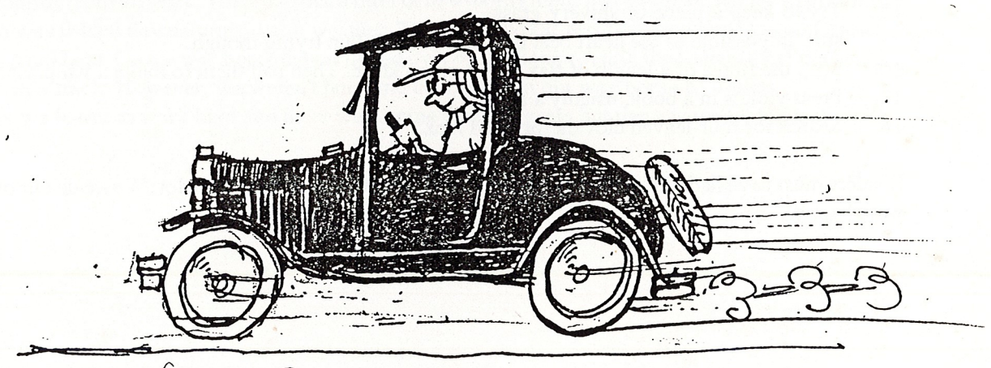
Sometimes I would stack weatherboards in a triangle to dry, and if they were doing spouting would have to keep the soldering irons hot. When I turned 15 I took up duck shooting and pig hunting.

After leaving school, my first job (and they were hard to get) was with the Hinuera Butter Factory and a high school mate, Doug Rallison, worked with me, nailing the ends in the butter boxes.

The three sides and lid were wired together and we had to put four nails in the three sides. There was no slacking on that job and sometimes if we couldn't keep up, the factory boys would give us a hand.

The salt was in a big heap on the other side of the shed from us and when the factory boys came through to get it and you weren't looking a big lump of salt would be thrown and knock your box over. They were a great bunch and Frank Brazendale kept in touch for many, many years.

I stayed in that job for about six months, but as I wanted to have a trade, took up butchering with Premier Meats in Matamata. I was the boy on the bike delivering meat around the town. It had a big box up-front and



Teacher in Ford Coupe.

sometimes it would be so full that the back wheel would come off the ground.

The side roads were mainly metal, corrugated and full of pot holes, so I would ride on the footpath. One day rounding a corner I knocked over Norma Dobson, the opposition's daughter. Norma was in my class at High School. After picking ourselves out of the hedge, and seeing she was all right, both of us minus a bit of skin we had a good laugh. Next day passing the Police Station, Bill Moore, the constable, stopped me and gave me a lecture about riding on the footpath, knocking people over. "Don't do it again," he said then grinned. He knew it was impossible to ride on the road.

Prior to Christmas a boy from Auckland used to come to the shop and give us no end of cheek. Vic Forsman and I decided that we couldn't put up with this for six weeks. When next time he came we both grabbed him and put luncheon dye on his penis. Half a teaspoon in a bucket of warm water makes it deep red.

Never saw him again after that.

I stayed butchering for three years until I was called up for the Army.

I lived in the Creamery

Kathleen West

It all started with my mother having to go into hospital and my auntie, Mrs Ellis then living at Taihoa, their farm was opposite Mr Mason's, she brought me to live with them. They had one daughter, two years older than me.

The great day arrived in 1912 when I had my fifth birthday and my first day at school, I believe I cried most of the day and the teacher, Mr Chalmers, nursed me most of the day. My cousin, Edna was disgusted with me which didn't help. Anyway I settled down and enjoyed many happy years at school.

My father was away at the war and my mother and brothers came and lived in the creamery cottage. I vaguely remember the old creamery which later was sold, and taken away. When my father came home from the war he share milked for Mr Robinson until he had to go to hospital. He passed away couple of years later, but in the meantime he drew (in a ballot) a farm at Hinuera, I was at Taihoa school for about six years and I remember I had a Miss Green and Miss Clifford as teachers. Can't remember the dates but we moved to Hinuera when I was in Standard 4. When I left school I stayed at home and helped on the farm until I married and we bought a farm at Taihoa so my three children had their schooling at Taihoa as did several of my grand children.

I often think of the many happy days I spent in Taihoa as a child and later when I married as everyone was so friendly.

Dad's Accident

Betty Blake (nee Headon)

It was hay-making time and I was helping Mum with the evening milking. Dad was raking the hay for the next day's harvest. Mum thought Dad was taking a long time to finish the turning of the hay. We looked out and saw that he was crawling around on the ground so we thought he must have lost something.

Eventually he came back to the cowshed with his face and hands covered in blood. He told us that the horse had taken fright and tipped him off the rake. On the way down he must have caught his ear and ripped it badly.

Mum placed a towel over his ear and we went into Matamata to see Dr Mackereth. He stitched Dad's ear back in place and when it healed it was hard to see which ear had been damaged. This was the first time I had ever seen anyone who had had an accident and I was very frightened.

Tossed off a Donkey

Lal Keane

I went to Taihoa as a bride in 1941 and left in 1976. We lived on what was the Mangawhero Road and which is now Taihoa North Road. A that time we were sharemilking for my husband's aunt, Mrs M.A. Hickey. After her death in 1947 we took over the farm.

Taihoa was a happy place to raise a family and on our road there were 40 children of permanent residents. When our eldest son first started school he used to go in the Hinuera Dairy Company's cream truck in the mornings. This changed though when the N.Z. Dairy Company took over our area and dried milk was supplied. This milk was delivered to a dump built on Cubis's farm. Eventually, of course, the tankers collected the milk from all the farms.

With half a dozen children there was the odd act of drama. Like the time Philip was bucked off the donkey and his arm was broken. This meant several trips to Waikato Hospital with long waits in the waiting room for X-Rays.

As the boys grew older they spent many happy hours fishing down the back of the farm in the Waihou River with quite a bit of success. Another time of excitement for the family was when the Hui family from the Kaimai came and camped in the implement shed to harvest the silage and hay. They used to go eeling in the Waihou and often presented us with some smoked eels.

It was a great day when our end of the road was metalled and eventually tar sealed. Prior to that the tar seal came only as far as Mander's farm.

Reading through some old family papers I found this rather interesting recipe for getting a mare into foal. It must have been about 1919 and well before the days of instant vet services. Farmers had their own ways of curing and nursing their stock.

'To get a mare into foal give them twice a week 1 small teaspoonful of strong pure iodine in half a cup full of whole milk. Stir and let stay awhile and then add so much flour as to make a thick porridge. Later add so much golden syrup or molasses as to make it sticky. Smear on the tongue of the horse.'

There is also a recipe for making stock iodine although it doesn't say what it was used for. Buy a bottle of brandy or rum and add 2 ounces of metallic iodine. Stir and use 1 tablespoon full to 100 gallons of drinking water once a week.

The handwriting is not very clear after all these years but the next recipe sounds really miraculous. It is a home made lick for prevention of milk fever, grass staggers, retention of after-birth and through this the barrenness and also the hard cases of mammitis.

'Mix

1 quart B.P. or Norwegian cod liver oil	3/-
20 lbs steamed bone flour	2/3
3 lbs Epsom salts	1/-
60 lbs crushed rock salts	4/6
20 lbs of Creamota	9d
4 gals warm molasses	2/-
6 ounces strong pure double-strength tincture of iodine	2/-

Mix iodine with jugful of whole milk, then stir and let stay a while. Later mix other ingredients according to writing down, leaving to last the molasses. To make stubborn cows take it for the first time, let them starve overnight and next morning mix the top of the lick with short grass or cabbage leaves to be given at liberty to springs cows three weeks before calving and later during milking time in small wooden box for those cows who give more than 21/2 gallons milk per day. Buy cod liver oil and iodine from chemist and apply ingredients elsewhere.'

Some of the accounts for 1919 make interesting reading too. Disc furrows; 6 pound, mower: 12 pound, 4 bags mixed grass seed: 25 pound, cheque book: 4/2d, posts: three pound, Herald: 1 pound 2/6d, horsebreaking Brindle: four pound, manure (Farmers Trading): 52 pound, 5 cows: 59 pound. The monthly milk cheques are there and also the expenses for the year — all sounding so small.

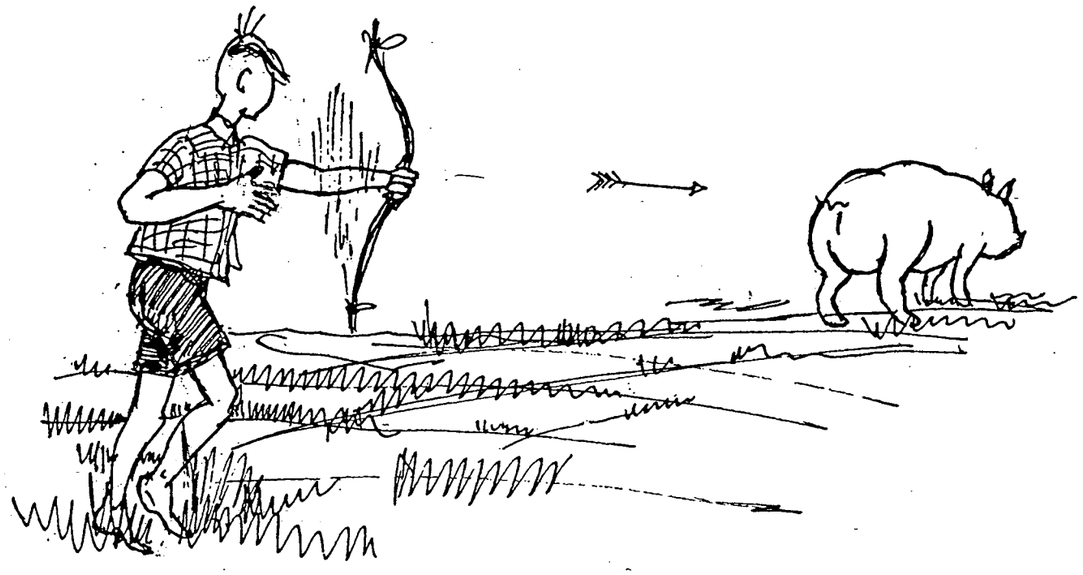
They were happy days in Taihoa.

Bows & Arrows

C.S. Neems (nee Hodge)

An incident I have never forgotten. One afternoon when my husband and I were milking, my son and a mate were playing in the fields with their home made Bow and Arrows. When my husband went to feed the pigs after milking one poor little pig was running around with an arrow in his hindquarter. This my husband removed.

At dinner that night the boys were asked if they were the culprits but alas there was silence and innocent looks. After a couple of days, they owned up to it. The pig was none the worse for it.



Many a pleasant afternoon was spent in the Taihoa Hall. We held cards during the war years to raise money to send parcels to the boys overseas.

At Christmas time there was a party for the children which they all enjoyed. A parcel for every child. In the summer time Garden Parties were held with a Fashion Parade in a local garden and a sports day for the children. It was one way of the community getting together for an afternoon and enjoying the outing. They were happy times.

Way Back When

Jean Henderson (nee Dunlop)

Before the Taihoa Hall was built in 1911, I remember going to school in Madill's wash house with Mr Chalmers as the teacher. There were nine pupils, the minimum number required for a school in those days. Rena Lobb whose mother was Mrs Madill's sister, used to deliver mail around Taihoa with a horse and gig.

On one occasion I remember the whole school walking down to the end of the road to see an army convoy go past — whether once or more I do not know.

There were pits dug under the lawsonianas at the end of the playing fiends for air raid shelters. I think we had practices for their use. I still have the enamel mug I used for drinking school cocoa - ghastly. Did we tip it out if possible or was that just my imagination?

Of teachers I remember only Mrs Frizzell and Miss Campbell. I remember too the daily recitation of tables, committing the coastal features of New Zealand to memory, big kids hearing the reading of the little kids, learning poetry, folk dancing, having the "Just So" stories read to us, sports day in at the domain with each school marching (much practice beforehand) behind its banner.

All so long ago.

Air Raid Shelter under lawsonianas

The Big Ones

Charles Wilson

Some of the most important things in our lives in the early days were the horses. There were no tractors or trucks so we depended on our horses for a large part of our daily work. My father bred Clydesdales and these great animals were to become my friends for many years. Where bulldozers would be used today to break in the land, we used our horses.

After the morning milking we would go out and catch them in their paddock, lead them up to be harnessed into the team we needed for the work to be done that day. Ploughing, discing, rolling, drilling, harrowing and almost any job we asked of them, they could do.

Each horse had its place in the team, the right leader, the left leader. I remember Doris, Lass, Nell, Little Joey, and Laska. Nell was the mother of Billy, Bonnie and Nelson. We always used Nelson for the stacker work during harvesting. Little Joey was prone to colic so we gave him vegetable turps and raw linseed oil. I often rode another horse and led Joey, round with me well into the night to help him get over it.

Although I rode in hunts, show jumping and had a polo pony, I think I still have a special affection for our loyal Clydesdales. While a schoolboy, I spent many weekends cutting tea-tree on the flats beyond the house. It was often 10-15 feet tall. The large tea-tree, at the back of the farm would have been 20-30 feet high. At 14 years of age I ploughed the hill where our present home is, using a team of five with block and tackle.

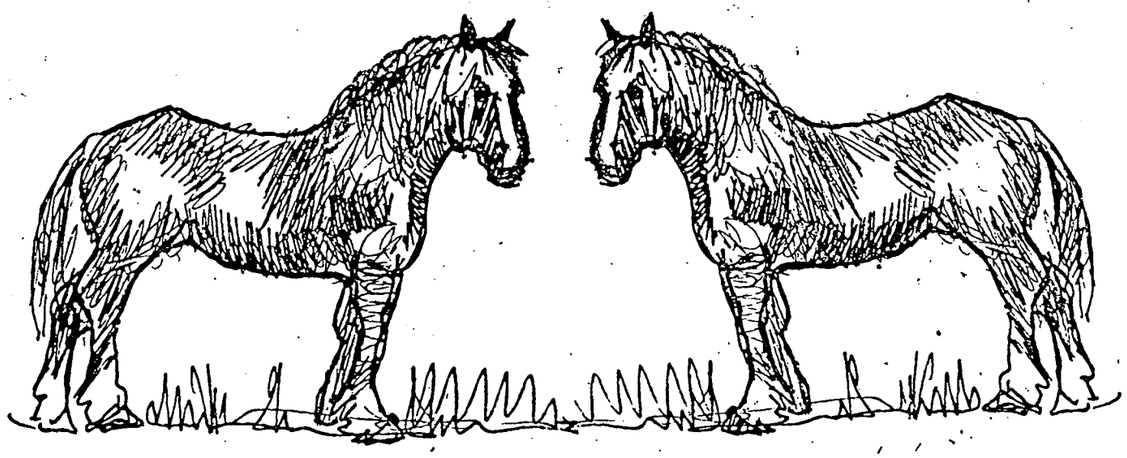
About that time, during the hot weather, my mother and sisters Joan and Audrey, were in Waikato Hospital with scarlet fever for several weeks. Two men came out to fumigate the house, sealing all windows and doors. Scarlet fever was very infectious and it meant isolation for us all.

We had a mill working on our farm in the nineteen twenties operated by a Mr Smith and another man, who may have been a brother. I seem to remember that they walked from Te Poi each day. Some of the huge pines on the farm were felled and as our land was too wet to take the timber out to the road, it went out through Collins' on our southern boundary. Some of that timber was used to extend our house, about 1924, I would think. Another room was added to it in the nineteen thirties, and a milkers' house was built costing 124 pounds.

Uncle Morgan Gould loved to speed along our road and on one occasion turned his Ford 10 over. Another time he collided with our mail box. However, he was a great public-spirited man in every way and worked hard for our district.

Trees have always been a feature of Taihoa. One day my Aunty Frances (Mrs McPhail) was on her way home with her son Don, in the pram and her daughter, Jean running ahead, after visiting her mother, Mrs Benjamin Gould across the road, when on this hot and very calm afternoon, a huge pine tree suddenly fell across the road falling in front of the pram and behind the child ahead. A really strange happening, but no-one was hurt.

I was born on this farm and I am still farming here at 75 years old.



Clydesdale Horses

Small Memories from . . .

Betty Blake (nee Headon)

- I often got into trouble at home for turning the bathroom light off when someone was having a bath. You see, for some reason, the light switch was in the kitchen.
- Birthday parties with hundreds and thousands on crusty bread and butter.

Don McPhail

- Do you remember when stock had to go to the sale on Wednesdays and you had to ring up a drover who would arrive on horseback with his dogs and would then drive the cattle to the sale-yards on Waharoa Road?
- Or when bobby calves would be put at the gate, sometimes in a sack with only their heads showing. Carriers would compete for them. The first to arrive would leave cash in a tin nailed on the gatepost - 1/6 and up to 2/6 (15 cents to 25 cents). Later competition grew more intense and carriers would come right into the cowshed.

Vera Rogers (nee Bell)

- Paddy, the fox terrier who used to wait by the gate at the road for Don to come with the wheelbarrow to get the cream cans to take back to the cowshed. Paddy sat on top and beamed.
- My wages were just two pounds a week in 1938.
- Learning to hand knit socks for the boys overseas.
- Buying a bike for four pounds and riding to Matamata and some times to Te Aroha between milkings.
- Having to peel the odd peach for the young boy of the family as he could not touch the furry skins.
- Not being allowed to clear out a spider web as it belonged to a pet spider who had flies fed to it each day.

Thelma Sealy (nee Gould)

- Eeling in the Waihou. Going with mother and catching a trout. Losing all our bait (liver) to a big eel after we had carefully put it in the water to keep the flies off.
- My brother, Neal and our boarder, Bob Grubner went eeling one night and arrived home later with some eels which they stored in water in the tubs. Afraid they might escape, I closed my bedroom door as I didn't fancy any of them getting into my bed.

Some of My Memories

Gwen Nicholls (nee DeAth)

One of the first of my memories of Taihoa was the picnic that used to be held in John Robert's paddock opposite to where Mrs Milne lived. It was called the Settlers' Picnic and, I think, was held in early February.

Skipper Sinclair and his father would bring a concrete copper which they would light up to heat the water. On their way in their old Model T they would pick up forms from the hall (our school). Toilets for the day were made of poles with split sacks around them for privacy.

There would be lolly scrambles (nobody seemed to mind that there had been cows in the paddock a few days before!), three-legged races, sack races, races for married women, married men, single women, single men and, of course, all the various children's races. Everybody would take something towards the lunch but I can't remember what my mother used to take.

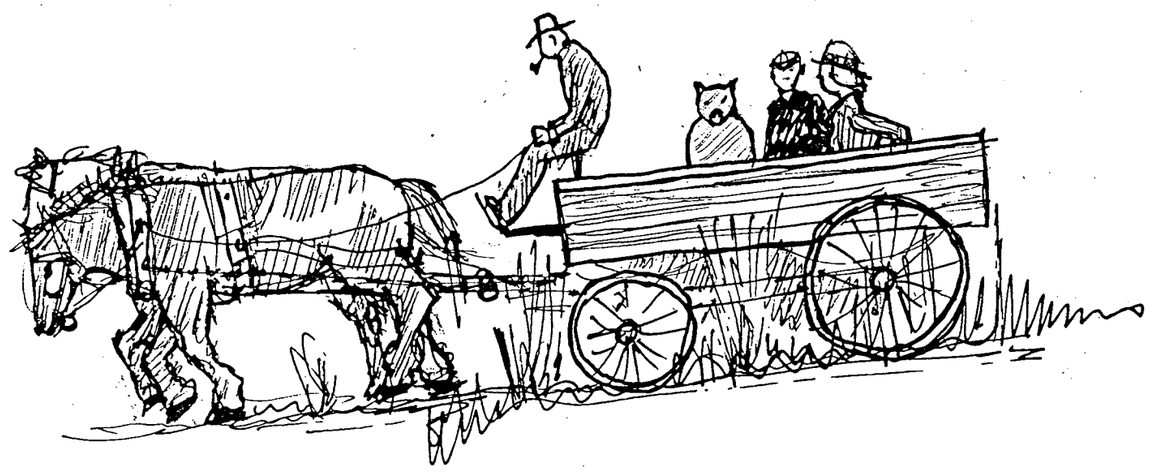
We used to walk to school with the Coombes family and the Pryce family. I think there were some Wests too. Betty Bennet used to have a bike and how we envied her!

Miss Tierney was our teacher and she later became Mrs Arnold. The Napier earthquake was felt at school and I remember the water splashing out of the tank. We were told to get under our desks.

Dad used to take the wagon with two horses to the sale in Matamata when he had pigs to sell. He would pick us up at school on his return and we would all get a ride home. That was quite a highlight.

Actually I missed quite a bit of schooling because of two bouts of rheumatic fever but I will always remember the lovely set of doll's clothes in feather and fan stitch that Miss Tierney made for my doll.

Such little things make the fond memories I have of my childhood days in Taihoa.



Gwen Nicholls
Some of My Memories

Ladies in the Morning - Men after Lunch

(Part of some notes made by Frances McPhail nee Gould in 1974)

In May 1907 my parents, Benjamin and Elizabeth Gould, then in their fifties, arrived at Hinuera by slow train to take possession of a 465 acre farm in Taihoa. It was ring-fenced but had no buildings. The Hinuera storeman drove them in his horse and dray to the farm and left them to pitch their tent under the trees. Neither had ever slept in a tent, let alone erected one. The next question was where to get water. However the farm next door was un-occupied so they were able to get water from the shearing shed there. Bathing was no problem as there was a hot spring at the corner of the farm. Waggon loads of people used to come to it from as far away as Turangaomoana on a Saturday morning for their weekly baths — ladies in the morning and men after a picnic lunch. (The Matamata Springs were not developed then).

Our farm was a mile by $^3/_4$ mile with no neighbours, rivers on two sides, idle Maori land on the third while the farm on the fourth side was unoccupied.

Meat was the only thing delivered. Once a week the butcher came to the gate with meat ordered a week before and took the following week's order. He had an old English hunting horn to let us know he was coming. If we ran short of meat, there were always plenty of rabbits and, sometimes, deer. I remember that on one occasion my father shot a deer from the kitchen window. It was grazing in the orchard.

We had to walk three miles across country for the mail, papers, bread and groceries. The only transport was by horse and dray, but, as the roads were only sand, they were often impassable.

It was 17 years before even one load of sand was spread on our $^3/_4$ mile frontage so it was often necessary to unhitch the leading horse and attach it to the back of the dray to pull it out of the bog. But we always got there!

In 1911 the farmers of the settlement built and paid for a public hall which was used for both school and church services. My brother, Morgan and I ran a Sunday School until war was declared in 1914 and labour was unprocurable. This was the only hall between Morrinsville and Rotorua and still stands used mainly for bowling.

The farmers used to take their milk in drays or waggons to the Mangawhero Bridge, then put it on sledges and pool the horses to sledge it the last three miles through Kilbride's paddocks to get it to the creamery in Matamata. Years later we had our own creamery opposite the hall and there was a lot more time for much needed farm work.

The only shops in Matamata were a combined grocery and drapery, chemist, a saddlery, a boot repair and, last, but most needed, a blacksmith. There was a railway office and a post office which was enlarged from time to time and then moved to a farm at the foot of the Kaimai and later burnt down by vandals quite recently. A new post office and residence was built where the post office now stands. When that became too small for the fast-growing population it was shifted to Short Street and is now the Dramatic Society's hall.

The first church, the Presbyterian in Matamata, was built in 1907 by voluntary labour (and still stands). The minister was a tower of strength as he had served part of his carpentry apprenticeship before entering the ministry. He was the Rev Peat. We used the old - no, not old - but cunning horse and dray to attend whenever we could. After church one day we went to yoke him up to come home but he had slipped his halter and was quietly feeding his way home - six miles. The solitary schoolteacher took father home for the night, mother got a ride with a neighbour and I went home with Mr and Mrs Stein, Snr. who lived in one of the old shepherd's cottages which stood where the first part of the Matamata College now stands. The neighbours found the horse quietly feeding two miles on the way home so rode him back, roused us up and we left for home at 2 a.m.

We were fortunate to live on the fertile land in Taihoa but even more fortunate to have the friends and the neighbours we did. People cared about other people and were always ready to help in times of stress.

Memoirs of 1921-1978 or Speed Wobbles

Lloyd Seed

I arrived in the Taihoa district at the tender age of four years with my parents, two brothers and one sister to settle on a farm property of 305 acres on the Taihoa North Road.

The Mangawhero block had been opened up for settlement in 1909. It was comprised of the area bounded by the Mangawhero Stream in the west and the Waihou River in the east and to the south by the Tirau-Matamata Road. Most of the properties ranged from two to three hundred acres.

By the early 20s most of the farms had been ploughed over from light scrub and fern and grassed to support small dairy herds. The road out from Matamata was metalled to the Mangawhero Stream and Taihoa North Road was a dirt track fringed with a chain-width of pine trees and macrocarpas. As a youngster we enjoyed climbing these trees for birds' nests and to retrieve the eggs.

School was held in the local hall which had been built in 1911. Classes went up to Std 6. Warmth in the winter was supplied by a large wood range positioned in the centre of the room. Hot cocoa was a regular feature during the winter months. Daily sweeping of the hall was done by those male pupils able to stay behind to do so. It was a paid job. Miss Bull was our teacher, followed by Miss Turner and then by Miss Tierney. I well remember her arrival in Mr George Mason's Model T Ford. She boarded with the Mason family and later moved to Matamata from where she commuted daily in her gig drawn by a Shetland pony. Most pupils in those days either walked to school or rode horses. About that time the Junior High School was opened in Matamata and most outlying schools were cut back to a top of Std 4 as the Std 5 and 6 were taken by bus into Matamata.

In retrospect, progress in the district was fairly rapid in the 20's. Taihoa North Road was metalled, power and telephone were connected to most properties.

Amongst the early settlers were such names as Wilson, West, McPhail, Allison, Madill, Patchell, Baylis, Holmes, Seed, Wright, Anderson, Mason and Gould. These were followed by Reeve, Thornton, O'Sullivan, Wallace, DeArth and Wheadon. All have left their mark on the district.

Most farmers were milking a herd of cows and supplying cream and using the skim milk to feed to pigs for bacon production.

Several farmers viz Val Anderson, George Seed, Bill Christie, Mark Madill and Mr Robertson pioneered the whole milk supply from the area. It was delivered in 20 gallon cans by the farmer to two collecting points. W.S. Gooseman Transport Ltd then transported this to Waharoa Factory twice daily in the flush where it was processed into butter and skim milk powder.

I can remember the arrival of the Christies who bought the farm opposite us. There was a son named Peter and he duly arrived on his first day at school on a bike. You can imagine the attention he got! Most of us rode horses and to see a bike was quite a novelty. There were some arguments too as to who was going to have the next ride. On the way home he wanted to show us how he could ride down Holmes' hill with his foot in behind the front wheel to act as a brake. However he got the speed wobbles and finished up over the handle bars skinning his nose, lips and knees in the process — a sorry sight . . . Needless to say, it was a day or two before we saw him again. In subsequent years as we grew up together we had a lot of fun e.g. playing cowboys and Indians, rabbiting, making tree huts, canoeing on the stream, scouts, football, etc.

Rabbits were plentiful on most farms and, as boys, we were able to trap and shoot them for their skins which we would dry out and sell . . . Roast rabbit was a cooked dish enjoyed by all. Surplus carcasses were cooked and mixed in with mash for the poultry.

As we approached the 30's, Mr Dick Holmes' house was burnt down and the following year Madill's house was razed. Also about that time, 1928, the school bus, driven by Mr Bill Johns of Te Poi capsized negotiating a bend on Mason's hill. Fortunately nobody was hurt.

Settlers' and school picnics were an annual event and were held on Mr Billy Wilson's farm property and later at Okauia Springs. There were races, lollie scrambles, raspberry drinks and ice cream.

We enjoyed social events such as table tennis, local dances, softball, indoor bowls, school Christmas parties and the annual men's night organised by the local Women's Division. This involved the whole district each year.

The depression years of the early thirties saw many farmers' sons leaving school prematurely to assist at home. The promise of a guaranteed price for butterfat by the newly-elected government in 1935 saw an increase in productivity in the next five years.

The outbreak of hostilities in 1939 slowed progress with the shortage of manpower, manure, petrol, etc. The late 40's saw the subdivision of some properties and a new generation emerging — the baby boom had hit the district.

At long last Taihoa was to have a proper school —a two-teacher school was built and the roll reached 70-80 pupils. By this time the North and South roads had been sealed and most farms were on whole milk supply, the farmers taking their milk to several collecting points.

Taihoa is now regarded as one of the top producing areas in the country. Although a lot of farms have changed hands over the years, there are still several owned and operated by grandsons of those early settlers.

19 RECEIVED. CASH.

Month.	Date	Received From.	What For.	Amount. £	s.	d.	Paid into Bank. £	s.	d.
1918									
May	4	Milk Supply	=	169	12	2	169	12	2
May	22	"	"	104	9	11	104	9	11
June	13	"		38	8	9	38	8	9
July	1	"	"	78	8	6	78	8	6
August	26	"		43	14	8	43	14	8
Sept.	26	"		19	1	8	19	1	8
Oct.	17			14		7	14	0	7
Nov.	4			44	11	10	44	11	10
Dec.				9	0	9	9	0	9
Jan				196	6	7	196	6	7
Feb.				25	15	0	25	15	0
March				162	10	4	162	10	4

Dairy Cheques for 1918.

"Scrumptious Afternoon Teas"

Betty Bradley (nee Bennett)

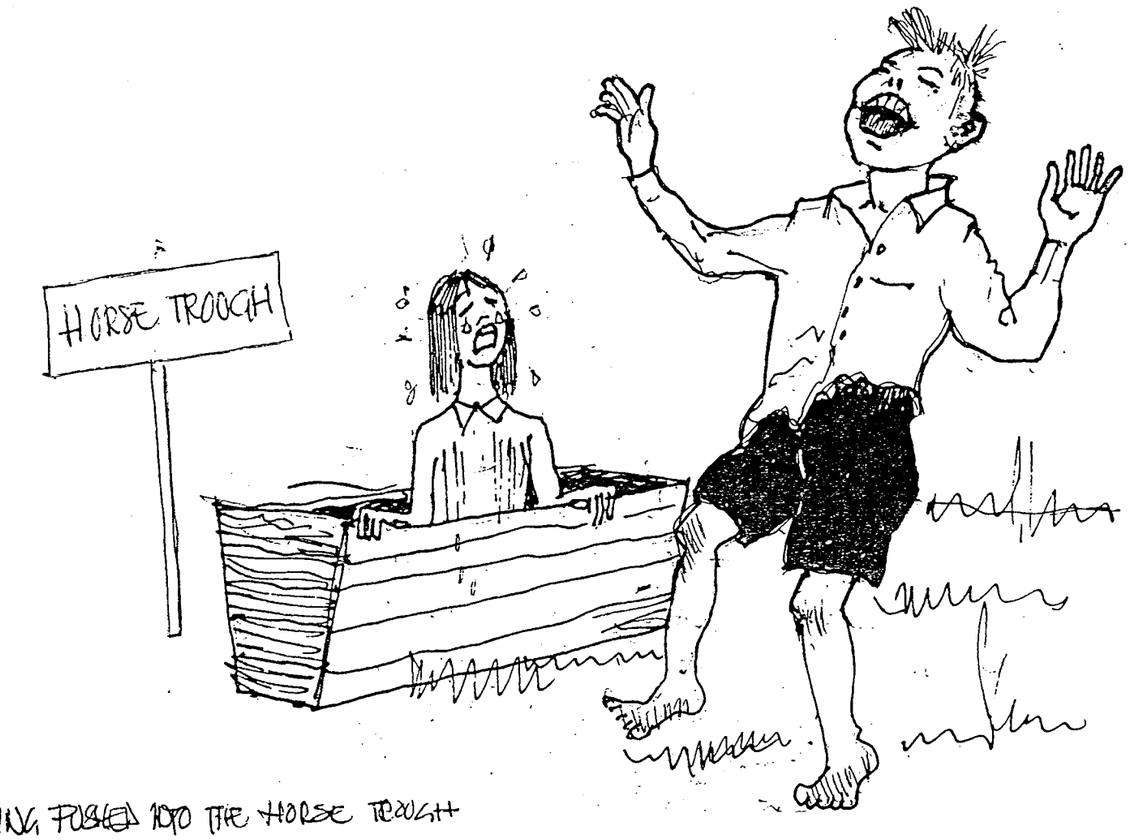
Here are a few fond memories of my childhood days in Taihoa . . .

The most dramatic episode that I can recall is the day that Jack Madill pushed me into the horse trough at school. I was absolutely petrified, dissolving into tears and running into Miss Tierney for comfort. As I was dripping water from head to toe, she duly wrote a note, to give to my mother. With tears flowing, I arrived home, the first one to greet me was my grandmother who really doted on me. After finding out what had happened to her only grandchild, she went straight down to Mrs Madill and in no uncertain terms told her what a very naughty son she had and that he should be severely punished.

The annual school picnic was a great event, such a great day held at the home of Mr and Mrs W.S. Wilson. Races of all kinds for the children and adults. The prizes for the children's events being sixpence for the first competitor past the post, three pence for second and one penny for third. Again my grandmother felt I had gained first in my races causing quite a lot of consternation amongst the other competitors.

Tennis parties played a big role in the country living. Lovely afternoons accompanied by scrumptious afternoon teas. Although a farming life is a busy one there was always time for getting together with afternoon tea parties or tennis parties. Sad to say I think those happy days are in the past.

Another highlight of my school days was the final of the school year ending with a school concert with all the school participating in the different items. Miss Tierney always had a beautifully decorated tree and Santa always arrived at the allotted time — I remember when I was quite young, one of the children told me that it was not really Santa that it was Mr Wilson whereupon I dissolved into tears.



BEING PUSHED INTO THE HORSE TROUGH

Chapter of Accidents

Olga Allison

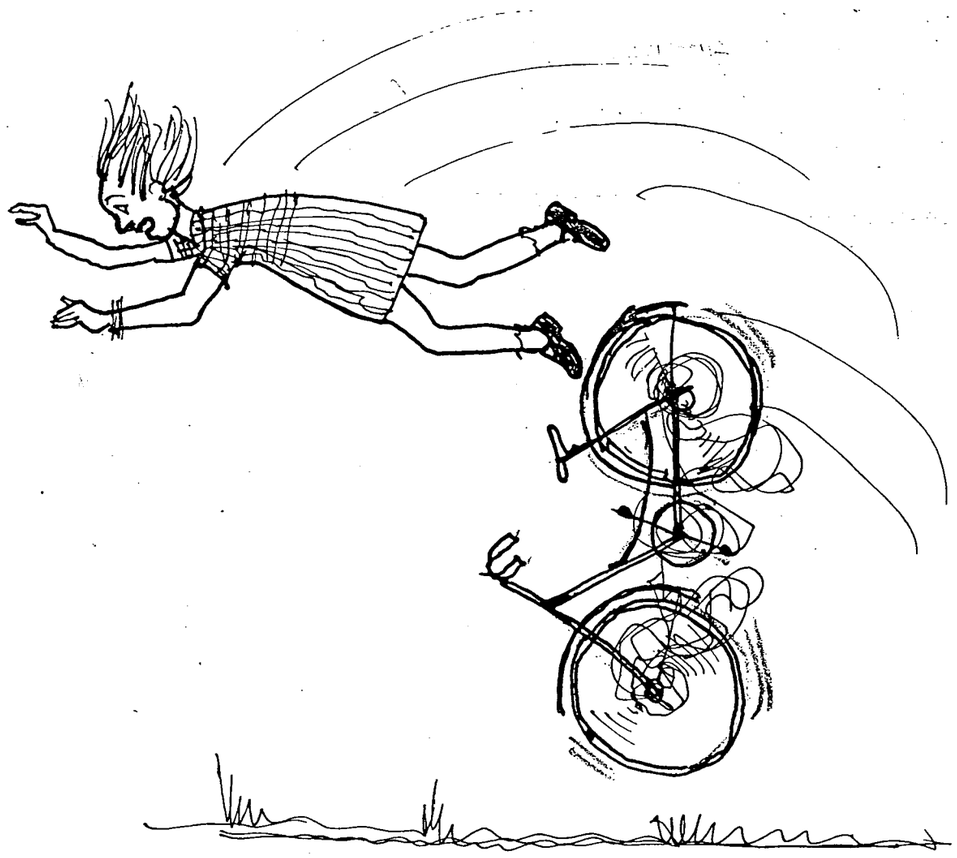
All our children were born while we lived in Taihoa and all went through the usual childhood sicknesses of measles, mumps, chickenpox, etc. So it was a relief to get all that over without too many complications. But little did we know we had entered the chapter of accidents.

Dennis spraying the hose on Annette one day she dashed inside and shut the glass front door and her hand went through the glass, off to the doctor for stitches.

Not long after Dennis and a friend were experimenting with Janice's bike by tying binder twine to the wheels. And as you might guess when Janice tried to ride the bike she landed over the handlebars onto the gravel road and a big gash in her forehead. Off to the doctor for stitches.

Some time later Dennis was riding an unfamiliar horse when he was bucked off onto the road, cut on head! Off to the doctor for more stitches!!

Well that was three in a row so we breathed easy. No great drama really, only at the time. So now they all had more sense, until one day we had the hedge cutters cutting our hedges and Dennis decided he would see how this big machine worked. He hopped up onto the wheel that was turning the belt and his foot slipped and was squashed between the belt and the pulley. So off to the doctor and then off to Waikato Hospital where he spent several days and had several weeks recovering at home with a very sore foot and many stitches.



The moral of that story is don't believe things only happen in threes.

Having lived in Taihoa for forty years the time came for us to retire so we bought a house in Matamata. As was the custom the Taihoa Social Committee farewelled all residents leaving the district and of course this applied to us. So the date and time was arranged for this farewell to take place at the home of Margaret and Max Dawson. We had arranged to pick up Janice and son-in-law Peter. We were told you must lock up your house in town when you go out, so we did just that both of us going around every window and door twice. Out to the car, no keys for either house or car!! As we didn't know our neighbours at that time we decided to walk to Janice's place and tell them of our plight. No problem says son-in-law who was very adept at opening car windows when keys were locked in. Back to the house where he tried every conceivable way to open a window. By now our time of arrival had well passed. So the only thing to do was break a small window above the sink and we thought it better to do this in daylight rather than have the neighbours hearing breaking glass late at night. The keys were finally recovered and off we went.

As were both feeling sad about leaving Taihoa we had jokingly said to the family out there that we might not turn up, and so of course they really began to think that was what was happening when we were so late in arriving. However, we had a most enjoyable evening with many past Taihoa residents travelling long distances to farewell us.

Home Again

Evelyn M. Baylis
(Taihoa School Principal 1951-1969)

Taihoa was the place where I began my schooling, and where I finished my teaching days.

At the residence of Mr Warren on June 17, 1911, a meeting was convened by my late grandfather Mr A.J. Vine, during which he read a letter from the Auckland Education Board stating that a teacher would be provided, and the hall would be rented for school purposes at 13 pound a year — provided there were an average of nine pupils in attendance.

This was the school that I started at when I was six years old, with my five-year-old brother, Fred — Mangawhero School. Miss Evelyn Freda Bull was the sole teacher.

The thirties came, and with them the slump. I went to the Auckland Teachers' Training College during 1936 and 1937. I then spent my P.A. year, 1938, living on the farm at Taihoa — home again!

I spent some years teaching in different schools. When the Taihoa School advertised for a new teacher in 1951, my mother wrote suggesting I apply for the position. By then my parents were aging. My application was successful and I came to Taihoa. I was home at last.

I taught here for nineteen years until I retired in 1969. I had bought No. 15 Burwood Road in Matamata and travelled back and forth to teach at Taihoa. By then I was teaching the sons and daughters of my classmates of my early years. I almost knew what they would say before they answered my questions.

I have many happy memories of Taihoa.

Tasty Lunches

Neil Gould

In the early 30's when we took charge of our part of the Gould estate after the death of my grandmother, Elizabeth Gould, Dad and Mum and my sister Betty and I slept in the barn while our house was being built. There was no power in the barn but we looked forward to going into a new home soon.

When we started to go to school, just over three miles, we went in the cream truck and two sets of parents took turns in bringing us home each day.

At about that time Dad had a Maori chap called Buster working for him. If they planned to work down the back of the farm for the day, Dad would tell Mum not to bother about providing them with lunch. Mum used to worry that they would be hungry but she would have been more worried to know that they ate huhu grubs found in rotting logs for their lunch.

I learned early in life to ride a horse. I rode Duke bareback to get the cows. He was very adept at drafting them and would cut back to retrieve a straying cow quicker than I could see it. I had to keep my wits about me or I would have been thrown off many times.

I think Dad had the first tractor, a Model T Ford altered to have big wheels at the back so that it wouldn't get stuck. That is where I first learn to drive on my own. That tractor sure had a lot of memories for me. Eventually the rear wheels wore out and, as we couldn't get them replaced, it had to be pensioned off.

Dad loved motor bikes, tractors and cars all his life. He did a lot of public work mainly in Taihoa. In April 1948 this extract appeared in the local paper. Mr Gould has been on the Taihoa School Committee as secretary/ treasurer for over 30 years. The story is told that when the president asked for the financial position of the society, Dad would fish around in his many pockets and eventually produce the torn-off corner of an old envelope with a few figures on it. However he could answer any question put to him about the finances.

He was secretary of the Taihoa Hall Society for 37 years, of the Matamata Jersey Club for over 19 years, of the Matamata District High School for 10 years and of the Dental Clinic Committee for 11 years.

"Few men in New Zealand can boast a better record of service to the community than Mr Morgan Gould has given. In all his offices he has been noted for his amiable disposition, strict impartiality and conscientious devotion to duty," I don't suppose he took huhu grubs for his lunches at the meetings.

Morgan Gould — my father.

Taihoa Regained

Les Williams

My introduction to Taihoa was on a dark, wet stormy night in August 1934. My brother, Bob and I had accepted a job with Mr Dick McMinn. He picked me up in Te Awamutu and Bob in Putaruru in his new Chev car with side curtains (no wind-up windows then). It blew and rained all the way to Taihoa and we wondered just what we were coming to. When we arrived at the house we met Mrs McMinn and their three children, Sam, Pearl and Richard. Mr McMinn was an Irishman who hadn't been in New Zealand very long and he was rather hard to understand until we got used to his accent. The three children spoke without an accent and we had no problem understanding them. They went to the Taihoa School just over the fence. The next morning after a cup of tea, our new boss said he would get the cows in and that the cowshed was over that way! It was still pitch dark, of course, but we finally found a gate in the lawsoniana hedge and followed a track till we came to some rails. Ah! Must be the cowshed. When we found the shed at last we then had to feel all around the walls for a light switch and by that time the cows were arriving.

The farm belonged to the Allison family and was being leased. This is where I first met Eileen Allison as she and her mother used to come out from Matamata to gather pinecones and firewood. Eileen was just a young lass of 22 then and we are still friends today both of us serving on the Matamata Historical Society committee.

Bob and I had pushbikes for transport but we later bought motor bikes and could travel further afield, often to the Okauia Springs on a Sunday afternoon.

Prior to coming to Taihoa Mr and Mrs McMinn had been sharemilking for Mr Beckett of Puketurua. They brought the herd of cows with them from there. One evening just on bedtime there was a ring to say the cows were all out on the road. Mr McMinn in his car and Bob and I on our bikes set out to head them off home. Some had gone north past the hall so Bob went in that direction but the older cows were trotting along heading for Puketurua. We headed them off by Conders in the Hinuera Valley and turned them around. When we had them back in the Taihoa Road, the first house on the left had its gate open — an open invitation to upset cows — so in I went to chase them out little knowing that my future wife was in that house, just a 12 year-old then. It was to be another four years before we met on the eve of her 16th birthday.

Mr McMinn had bought a pedigree bull from Leppers in Taranaki. When this bull injured itself, a vet came from Hamilton to treat it. The vet said his mother was Swedish and his father was Norwegian. With his accent he called himself a Sveedish-Norra Veechan. Mr McMinn with his Irish accent and the vet with his accent just couldn't understand each other even though they were both speaking English or thought they were, so I had to interpret for them.

I had the job of doing most of the team work on the farm and got to know the horses really well. They must have trusted me because when one of them ran a stake in the bottom of her hoof it festered and had to be cleaned out and packed with a dressing each evening. At that time we were working with John and Andrew Dawson at Te Poi for the haymaking. We left our horses at their place, including the one with the injured foot, having taken the ointment and dressing around in a tin for them to treat her. But no way would she let them even touch her hoof, let alone dress it. They tied her up and put a twitch on her nose, which is supposed to subdue a horse, but they had to give up. The next morning they told us what had happened and when we were harnessing the horses, i changed the dressing. She wasn't tied up — I just tapped her on the leg and she lifted her hoof. I put it on my knee where she left it till I had finished. John and Andrew stood there cursing.

I remember working with the team of horses between milkings, ploughing, discing, tine harrowing and rolling and getting the ground ready to plant choumollier, then drilling the seed in . I can't remember the acreage but it was quite a lot and I wasn't off the farm for eight weeks except Sundays and those horses never faltered. They were certainly a great team.

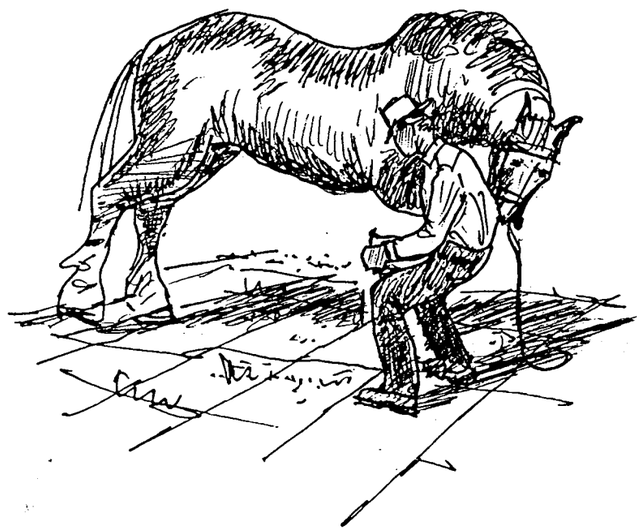
I must mention my dog, Bride, who was named after her grandmother. She was a Smithfield, a very intelligent animal with a naturally short tail. She was grey. Getting the cows in one morning in the dark, Bride went ahead of me to round up the herd and have them by the gate when I got there. The cows came through but when I shut the gate Bride wouldn't come with me but just stood there and barked and went away from me up the paddock. I followed her and she led me to a cow that was down with milk fever. I had her descendants for the rest of my farming life. I remember once when Bride had a litter, the owner of the father of the pups had six daughters and Bride had had a litter of nine. Yes, all females!

Allison's farm was about three hundred acres and when their son, Ernie wanted to come back to the farm after he had had polio, he thought it would be too big for him so McMinns bought half the farm and built a new house, shed and manure and implement shed. As both Bob and I were not needed on the smaller farm, Mr McMinn said we would have to decide which of us would stay so I agreed to go. Mr and Mrs McMinn looked after Bob and me treating us as family and we remained friends always.

In 1939 I came back to Taihoa to work for Alex McPhail. I arrived there as I have said on the eve of Jean's 16th birthday. Then came the war and we wrote to each other all the time I was overseas. When I was home on furlough in 1943, Jean's mother, Frances McPhail was badly gored by a bull and got a nasty gash in her thigh and spent a long time in the Elizabeth St Hospital. Needless to say, the bull was minus its horns after that accident.

Jean's young brother, Don had taken over the running of the farm by then as her father was suffering from ill health. I came home from overseas after the war years in October 1944 to have an operation on my eyes. This was successful and we were married from Taihoa in November 1944 on a cloudless day.

Yes, Taihoa has certainly been good to me.



Horse with injured Hoof.
Les Williams

1927 to 1936

Lorna Gray (nee Maxwell)

In 1927 I went to live in Taihoa with my parents, Mr and Mrs Maxwell. Mother was a member of the Women's Institute and I joined too. I joined basketball and rode my pony into Matamata College to play. As I had a good pony I was able to ride it to the northern end of Taihoa and cross the stream to the springs. I was usually accompanied by some friends. The pools were lovely and warm and we had a choice of the hot pool or the larger cooler pool.

It was usual in those days for girls to stay home and help with lawns and with the milking and to take drinks to the men in the harvesting field. We often had outings as at that time my Dad had bought a car and we went visiting on Sundays.

I learned to sew and was able to make some of my own clothes. This was a good interest for me. I enjoyed going to the local dances held in the Taihoa Hall and I took part in some of the plays produced then.

After I was married to David Gray we went to live in Brookby and here I had a hand sewing machine which was all steel and was very old. It was a Worthington and it arrived with David's great grandparents in the 1850's. It came down to me and later sat around our place unused for many years. It was such a help and I remember making a two-piece suit with it. I felt quite well-dressed when I went to Hamilton with my son. We eventually decided to sent it to the Firth Tower Museum in Matamata where it is now in the pioneer cottage there.

My parents liked their time in Taihoa with the land much easier to farm and to have a garden which was an interest of mine too.

One terrible experience we had was a very bad storm which tore the roof off our house — really frightening.

I remember sharing my 21st birthday in Taihoa with Myrtle Mason (later Warrender).

The two piece suit.

Near Misses

Tom Thornton

Let's go back to the days when harvesting was done by hand and horse-power, and I don't mean multiple horse-power as in a tractor. I mean two horses pulling a mower, then one in a rake or possibly a tedder and, when the hay was ready for stacking, two horses in a four-wheel sweep bringing in a good load partly carried on the prongs and partly pushed by the gate forming the front of the sweep. It was a case of driving by landmarks because the driver could not see over the big load and had no idea if anything was in the way.

I will never forget the day when Jean brought our very dear first-born daughter in the pram into the paddock. She parked the pram at the end of the stack away from the track being used at the time by the approach of the sweep. Then, unnoticed, the driver came round the other end of the stack oblivious of the presence of the pram and baby and, of course, unable to see in front, collected it and tipped it over. Fortunately a load "Whoa!" from the top of the stack stopped the horses before any damage was done.

Then there was the day we were stacking hay when young Jack Madill was helping to build the stack which had by then reached a considerable height. As the grab-load of hay swung round, the wind caught it and sent it a bit too fast or maybe too wide so that Jack had to step back quickly and, in doing so, fell to the ground, fortunately without injury to himself or anyone else as he took his hay fork over too.

The mast and boom stacker and grab — yes — do you remember how it was accepted practice to go up onto the stack by hanging underneath the opened prongs? I wonder if Bill Holmes remembers the day when the grab closed on him in mid-air. Just as well he was much slimmer then than he is today!

It was usual for the one holding the grab to take hold of the near prongs and reach out as far as possible over the loose hay — then pull back to fill in as much hay as it would hold — then throw the near prongs down to enclose the load. This action gave Monty Hollis a fright one day when he realised that the left prong had pinned his foot to the ground. Hastily lifting the prong and pulling off his shoe, he was delighted and very surprised to find that the prong had gone right through the shoe between his big toe and the next toe without even breaking the skin. How's that for good luck?

When Lyn was old enough she loved to come up to the shed to help me with the milking by bringing the next cow into the bail and putting the chain round the cow and hooking it up. (This, of course, refers to the old-style walk-through bail system). It so happened that one particular cow did not like anyone too close to her rear end and, being an Ayrshire cross, was a big powerful animal with a kick in proportion. Once as Lyn took hold of the chain, I saw the cow raise her leg and, putting it gently against Lyn's chest, quietly pushed her back out of the way!!!

Back to those horses again. When I first arrived in Matamata in January 1931 and went to work for Bill Blennerhasset, harvesting was in full swing. I was a new chum just arrived from England and, never having been on a farm before, I was fair game for the lads and a certain amount of leg-pulling resulting in a number of dares. I think the most memorable one was instituted by one, Ron who dared me to get on the McCormick four-wheel sweep and go out and get a load. It was my first attempt to drive a horse and one of the pair seemed to me to be a "bit difficult". However I was determined not to fail so duly sat up on the seat and away we went, collected a good load of hay and safely returned it to the stack. Don said, "O.K., I'll take over now," but Bill intervened telling Ron to carry on on the sweep and I was told to carry on driving the horses. I seem to remember that I didn't get quite so many dares after that episode.

Funerals, Piccolos and Rockets

Eileen Handley (nee Allison)

When peace was declared after the 1914-18 war, Taihoa resident, Miss Annie Robinson came to our school (hall) stamping on the porch floor and rattling the door and calling, "Peace is declared!" Excitement was high among the pupils especially when we were allowed home early with the news.

I remember the horse-drawn hearse passing the school. Miss Bull brought us all inside and we lowered the blinds. I think it was Mr Quinlan's funeral. It was traditional in the 1920's for blinds to be lowered when a funeral was passing as a mark of respect. Black crepe arm-bands were worn by male relatives of the deceased and the widow wore black, sometimes for a year.

We liked to listen to Mr P. Quinlan playing his piccolo in the evening. He was our neighbour and the music drifted in the still air across the paddocks. He was fond of children and taught me how to hold the reins and how to place my feet in the stirrups if I met him while riding my pony into town — the only time I ever used a saddle.

The Matamata Hunt Club sometimes passed over Taihoa farms. I recall them passing over our farm and into Mr Quinlan's. There were suitable places made in the fences and hedges for the horses and the hounds to jump over.

In our small community when there were dances, house-warmings or tin-cannings anyone who could play an instrument was in great demand. Mr Alex McPhail and his accordion supplied much of the music.

Guy Fawkes was a great time in our lives. After days collecting wood and building a bonfire, small groups of neighbours joined together with their ten shillings' worth of fireworks (quite a lot in those days). These were pooled and the dads and older children lit the more dangerous ones.

When all the fireworks were finished and only ashes and red embers remained, we put small onions and potatoes among them. When they were cooked they were delicious. Supper would be brought out and anyone who could recite or sing was called on to finish a lovely evening. In the morning we searched for crackers that hadn't gone off. These were called fizzers and we had fun lighting the gunpowder in them.

Taihoa from 1909

David J. Gray O.B.E.

My father, Thomas S. Gray purchased 305 acres of land on Taihoa Road North in 1909 from Mr J.H. Johnston. The farm was on the opposite side of the Mangawhero Stream from the Firth Tower. My parents came from the South Island and they married in 1909 on the same day as Mr and Mrs George Mason. Mr and Mrs W.S. Wilson had married two weeks previously so there were at least three sets of newly-weds in Taihoa at that time.

I was born in 1910 and I have been told I created a bit of a buzz arriving somewhat unheralded. The nearest doctor was in Te Aroha but I was born in our house in Taihoa with the assistance of Mrs Holmes, senior — Dick and Dave Holmes' mother. My sister Eileen was born in 1913 and Doris in 1914. At that time Mrs Farmiloe took in patients and the girls were born there.

Matamata was just a small village then and my birth certificate shows that my birth was registered in the Morrinsville courthouse. Taihoa was rated as having very light poor soil which didn't grow bush — just manuka and bracken fern but, with the advent of superphosphate, blood and bone dust applied to pastures and crops, it showed a remarkable response which soon led to more cattle and much needed consolidation of the soil.

Most farms had a limited area of grass with the remainder still being in the original state on the larger farms when we left the district in 1920. I remember oats for chaff which was in demand for feeding horses. A common sight was to see two to four horses hitched to a two-furrow plough or one horse in the gig or buggy and pair. A dray needed two heavy horses with one in the shafts and one in front known as the leader — two horses pulling the reaper and binder or mowing grass for hay, sweeping, etc. At that time tractors were something for the future.

My father grew large areas of swedes and the surplus was sold to other farmers for wintering their cattle. Harvesting of hay was carried out by some farmers working together pooling their labour, horses and equipment until their respective hay-making was finished. There were no balers — all hay being stacked.

I looked up some of my father's records which showed he ran about 400 ewes and some cattle up to about 1911-12. At that time the Taihoa Creamery came into being and he would have been one of the first suppliers. It was on two to three acres of land adjoining Herb Baylis' farm. His house was only a few chains from the creamery which was run by Mr Connell.

Milk was taken from our farm by waggon in cans, separated at the factory and the skim milk taken home to feed calves or pigs. Cows on our farm were all shorthorns and varied in colour from white to red, many being white and red or roan. Records show we had 44 dairy cows and that every calf was reared. It was common to keep the steer calves to 3 year-old bullocks. When ready to kill, they were trucked by train from Matamata to the Westfield Freezing Works.

The Matamata plain was blessed with sand not far below the surface and in some areas there were deposits of pumice. The early Taihoa roads were made of this material. I remember the road from Matamata to the top of the hill above the Mangawhero Stream was metalled part way with white lime stone and the rest with blue metal.

I did not start school until I was six. My first teacher was Miss Clifford and my last teacher in Taihoa was Miss Bull who later retired to Matamata. My mother taught me quite a lot at home and I got through the primers in one year. There were 23 pupils when I left. We boys were little devils at smoking anything that would smoke. We enjoyed each others company and liked nothing better on a Saturday than to take our lunch and to go bird-nesting and exploring.

I remember the farmhouse where we lived until 1919. It was one of the popular square design of that time with a verandah on the front, passage from front to back, two bedrooms, lounge (also used as a room to bed people down if we had an overflow of visitors), living room with pantry, safe for food, wooden tubs with the old corrugated rubbing board, wood stove, with hot water and tap attached to the side, bath and usually an enamel basin. All the necessary amenities were in one room. Lighting was mainly kerosene lamps with candles in candlesticks for going to bed.

It was usual for most families to have orchards and we had peaches, apples, plums, pears, figs, gooseberries, quinces and red currents.

Chopping wood with a tomahawk

The centre of activity in Taihoa was the hall which I believe was built in 1919. It served as a place to have dances, the school, Sunday School, church, meetings and other events. In 1919 I went there to learn to roller skate. Somebody from Matamata owned the skates and hired them out for a small charge. Morgan Gould was my first Sunday School teacher. He rode a motor bike at that time. Sunday School picnics were a highlight then too.

Unfortunately for my family my mother died suddenly in 1917. I well remember seeing her bathing a carbuncle by her temple. It took her life about 36 hours after she arrived at Waikato Hospital. To get there was quite a journey too. I was told later that she was taken from the Matamata railway station on a stretcher in the guard's van on the Rotorua Express. She enjoyed her few years in Taihoa with most being young people of a similar age.

Both my parents were buried close to the main gate tin the Matamata Cemetery. I still have a 1917 Matamata Record which gives an account of my mother's funeral. My father had some difficulty in finding anyone to look after his three young children. At one stage Morgan Gould's elderly mother helped out for a while. Then she decided to visit her sister in Australia. It was near the end of the 1914-18 war. The ship she was on, the Wimmera, struck a German mine and sank but she was rescued with a large number of other passengers.

An unmarried lady, Miss Knight aged about 50 took over looking after us. She, with my father, gave us a stable home and in 1919 she encouraged my father to sell his farm to Mr G. H. Seed by saying that if he would shift near to Auckland where her parents, brothers and sisters lived, she would stay with the family until we all grew up. She was with us for 23 years and then married when she was 72 living until she was over 80.

For a year my father rented the old creamery house while he looked around for his next home which was in Manurewa. As I remember it the creamery house was square, fairly well painted and stood quite a bit back from the road. Morgan Gould had a few acres of land there where he kept bees near our boundary. Some time later I believe the hives all burned one night at sunset . . . There was some tall gorse which no doubt was good for bees but also a sanctuary for rabbits which I enjoyed trapping.

I liked being near to the school and closer to my friends, the West boys, Mark Madill, Ernie Allison and others. There were quite a few girls there too, the Masons, the Shaws, the Madills, Evelyn Baylis and Eileen Allison who had long, dark curls.

One little episode I remember is when my father caught me chopping wood with his tomahawk. He said, 'If you cut your foot you will have to go to hospital/" Well, I made a job of it. I covered the wound with plenty of dirt but it came to light when my mother bathed me at night. A good clean-up, a bit of disinfectant and it healed O.K. I still carry the scar.

In 1920 we left for Manurewa where I finished my primary schooling with my college education in Auckland but I always had a feeling that I would like to come back to Taihoa, and in 1927 I arrived back to spend 3 to 4 years working at Okauia. I played football in the juniors and then joined my friend Bill Warrender playing for the Hinuera seniors.

Then it was back to Taihoa to work for one of the most colourful characters who ever lived there, Mr H. Wright. He arrived there in 1920 and lived opposite our original farm. If a neighbour was sick or in trouble, he would be the first to help him but he did not suffer what he believed to be fools gladly. Many feared him when he began to beat the air and roar a bit but I realised it was all hot air and steam and we built up a mutual respect for each other and were good friends until he passed away . . . I even stayed at his house and was married from there in 1936 to Lorna Maxwell of Taihoa.

There were very few cars in Taihoa prior to 1919. The Matamata taxi was owned by Mr Stanley. Wests had a Ford — quite a versatile car and, being cheap, they were called tin lizzies. They also had an Oakland. Wilsons had a Buick but from 1920 onwards cars became much more plentiful. (We have been married for 56 years and now live in Morrinsville).

Daydreams

Valerie Barron (nee Seed)

During the 1950's there were lots of families living in Taihoa North Road with at least four children and, more often than not, there were six. They were busy times for mums and dads and ever so much more fun times for the children. It was a decade that saw the "outhouse" replaced with an indoor toilet, the introduction of wringer washing machines instead of the copper and the days that some housewives hotly defended the coal range but marvelled at the efficiency and speed of electric ovens.

Without T.V. in our home until I was 14, I had plenty of time to pursue the outdoors and there were always some keen neighbourhood children to share with. Our mother used a school whistle to round us up as our favourite playing places were down on the farm away from houses.

Sometimes we would take a string of sausages (they usually came in lots of six — a pound or 500gms) wrapped in brown paper as plastic bags had not made the market then, down to a grassy bank on the edge of the Mangawhero Stream. Once there we would flop on the bank and look to the sky and "discuss" the world's problems such as (1) the BULL! (2) who had had the strap at school (3) dream of being mothers and the names we would call our children (4) watch the skylarks, thistledown, bees and hawks aloft.

Then we would dig out a turf and build a fire to cook our sausages on sticks. It was always a major exercise to get the right kind of stick as it had to be long and straight and green enough not to burn. Of course, the best sticks were always up the bank directly above the Mangawhero Stream which seemed so swift to us as 9 years olds. With full tummies and feeling thirsty we would trudge home. We were never allowed to go near the stream no matter how tempting. After all we didn't want to "end up at Thames!!" We weren't really sure where that was except I remember the one-way bridge there over the Waihou River with its traffic lights and it really was a long, long way from home.

As I grew up we left behind these adventurous activities and turned our attention to communicating. Our telephones were on a party line — up to 10 families shared the same line and as we grew into teenagers the phones were always red-hot. Our phone number was 348K and it had to ring Long-Short-Long for us. We heard everyone else's ring too and we soon learnt the Morse code. Fortunately everyone of the road was a dairy farmer so there were few calls after 9 p.m.

There were no free phones, self-dialling, call waiting or fax machines. Just the operator for every single call you made and then there were the younger siblings who relished in eavesdropping especially when a boy-friend was calling to a bigger sister. If you were on the phone for 30 minutes or more you sometimes had the embarrassment of the operator interrupting with "Line needed for tolls, please." We would immediately hang up and listen for the ring to work out who was getting an important call. Toll calls always seemed so official and important. Methinks now that some of them were not toll calls at all —just a frustrated incoming caller.

About 1956 saw the school bus come up Taihoa Road as far as the dump on bachelor, Bob Hall's farm. It was the now disused stand for milk collection now nowhere to be seen.

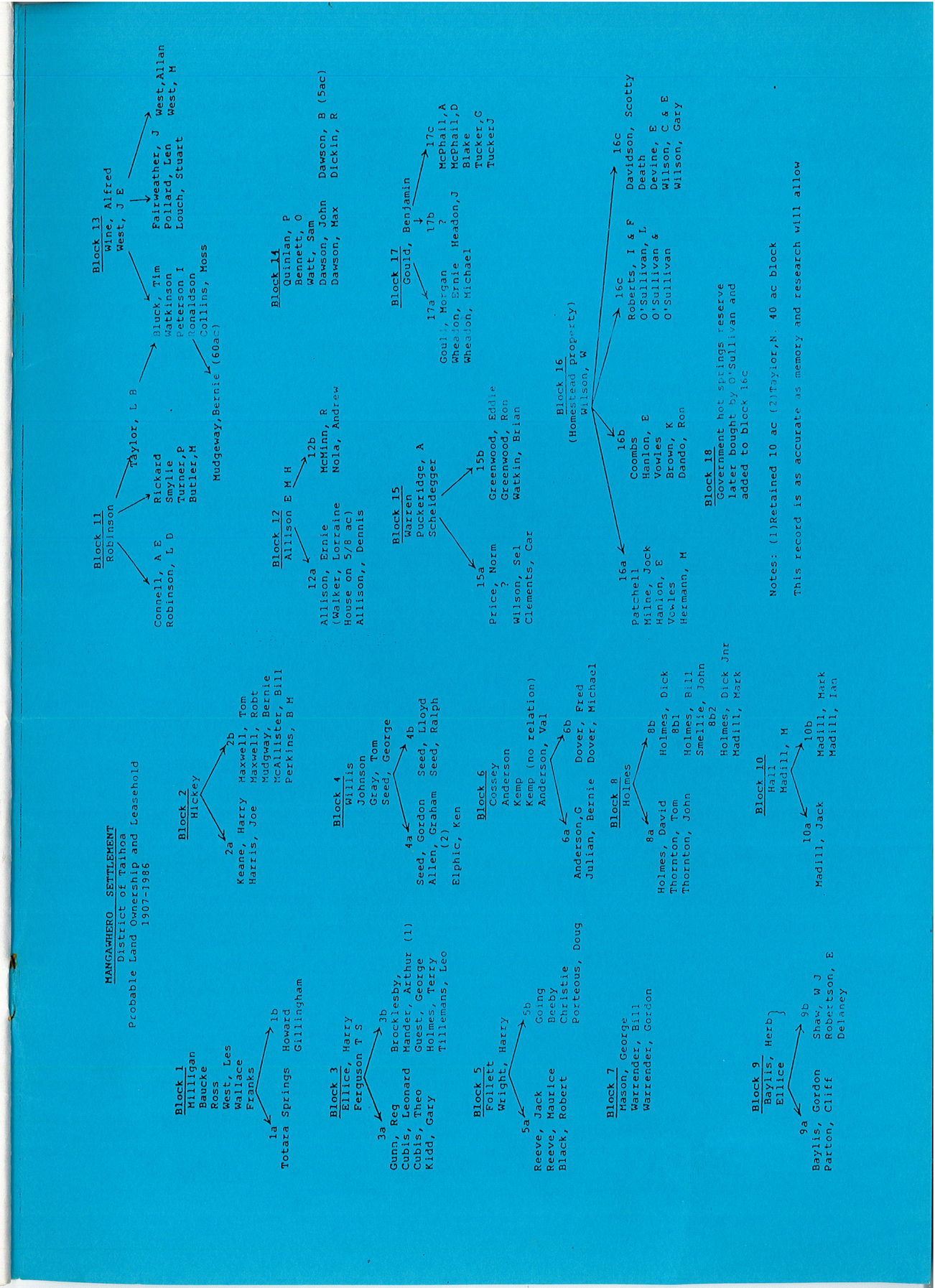
We heard our parents proudly talk about the "Butterfat Mile" being Taihoa North as the highest producer of butterfat in the southern hemisphere.

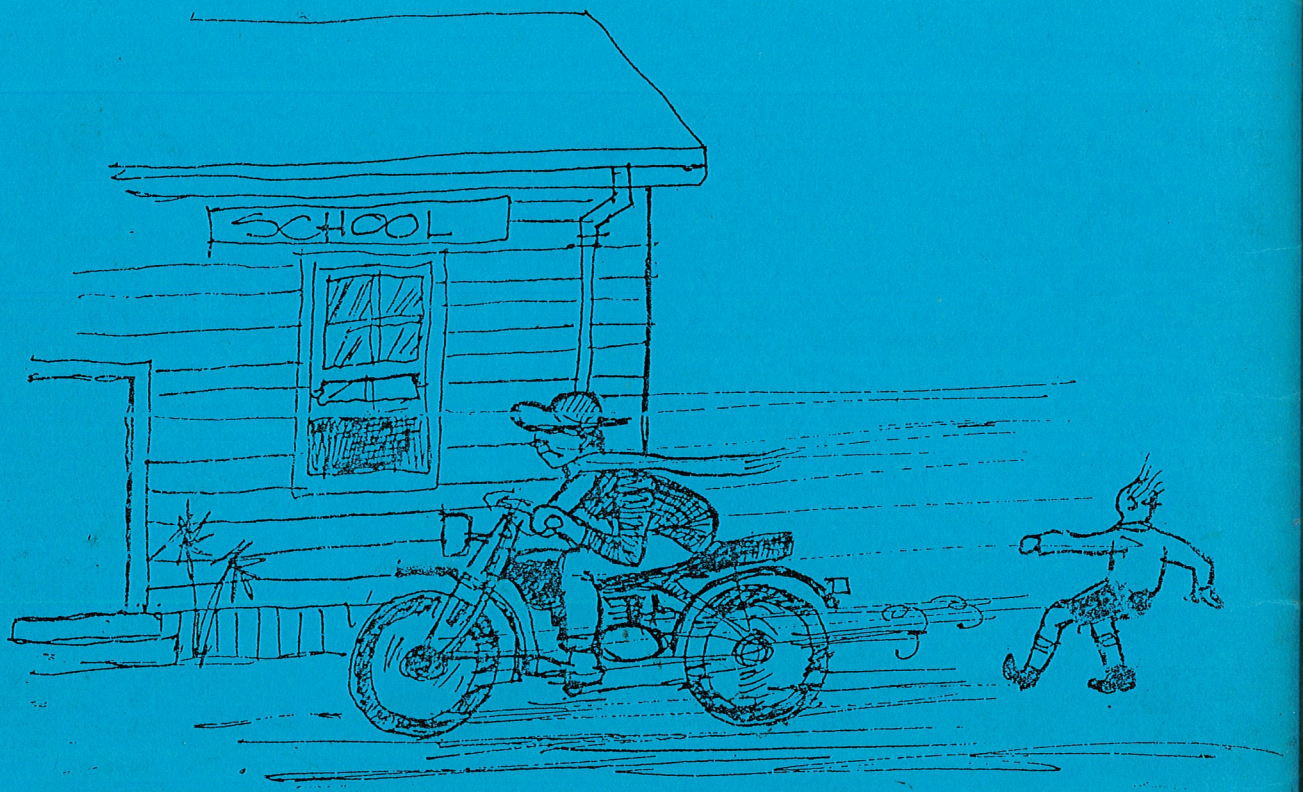
We also heard them discuss just who might be responsible for taking our peaches off all our trees in the summer and some years later realise that it was the work of possums. They never used to be there.

We heard them talk about the changes to herd-testing and accommodating the tester each month.

They talked about the distress of losing large numbers of cows due to TB testing. I remember too seeing the ugliness of eczema in cows. I remember too my dad being bedridden with leptospirosis for what seemed like months.

All communities have their share of happiness and sorrow and Taihoa was no exception. Most families were regular churchgoers — a mixture of all denominations — and that faith helped them to fully enjoy the good times and gave them strength during the tough times. I have many moments to treasure and I'm glad my childhood was spent in Taihoa.





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